

# THE EVENING NEWS.

Monday, April 11, 1870.

## THE MORMONS.

The following article on "The Mormons," from the Louisville Courier Journal, of the 25th ult., is founded upon two articles published in the London Fortnightly Review, written by the son of Earl Russell, Lord Amberley, who visited Utah last summer:

The bill for the reconstruction of Utah and the suppression of polygamy, which has just passed the Lower House of Congress, is a measure of some importance, though it does not alter the spirit of the Radical policy of interference with which the country has been so long afflicted. Our Washington correspondent gave, in his letter of yesterday, a graphic sketch of the leading features of the proposed enactment, and since the question has assumed a shape at once so direct and live, it is worth our while to consider it more attentively than its remote and abstract nature has hitherto seemed to warrant. Mr. Hooper, the delegate from Utah, presented in his speech before the House the Mormon view of Mormonism with zeal, if not with ability, and his remarks will, doubtless, be read by the country with interest, although we may reasonably suspect both their authenticity and their value. We do not desire a partisan argument upon a case of this sort. What we really desire and need is accurate information from some impartial source.

Viscount Amberley, a son of Earl Russell, better known as Lord John Russell, made a visit to this country a year or two ago, and like many foreigners traveling in the United States, extended his journey to Utah, in order to learn something of the Great West in general, and this remarkable social and religious phenomenon in particular. The latter he seems to have made the object of his special study, and that he studied it to some purpose is evidenced by two very superior articles which were published in the November and December numbers of the Fortnightly Review. These papers contain all that is important or interesting to know about Mormonism. So far as we are aware, they constitute the most complete and instructive compendium of the rise, progress and theory of the sect which has yet appeared. His account is as fair and correct as a perfectly impartial and unprejudiced mind could make it. He has dealt with his subject in the spirit of a philosopher. His aim being to know Mormonism as it really is, it was of far more importance to study the writings of the Mormons themselves than the accounts which have proceeded from avowed enemies. It must not be supposed, however, that because Lord Amberley was animated by a purpose to do the Mormons justice, he has therefore found nothing to condemn and everything to admire in their system. On the contrary, their peculiar doctrines and practices are to the last degree obnoxious to him, but he has not for that reason shrunk from saying for them the best word their case admits of. He rightly conceived that what the inquiring and reflective portion of the public desire respecting Mormonism is information not denunciation. The latter is very common and very cheap, the former is quite rare, and the writer gives it to us at the price of studying his subject until he understands it.

Lord Amberley's account begins with the origin of Mormonism in the fanatical but ingenious and unscrupulous mind of Joseph Smith, and traces its development from this obscure and humble beginning to its present condition of power and importance. As this, however, is a part of Mormonism with which all are sufficiently familiar, it would be superfluous to repeat the wonderful history. The chief interest and value of Lord Amberley's article is contained in the remarks he makes concerning the doctrine and peculiar institutions of Mormonism. What space, therefore, we shall be able to spare shall be devoted to a few extracts bearing on those branches of the subject. Perhaps it is not generally known that the Mormons claim to belong to the Church of Christ, and accept the Bible as the word of God. Speaking of their theology, Lord Amberley says:

"But while we do not hesitate to pronounce that condemnation in the name of religion, we must, in the name of justice, keep distinctly before us the great fundamental principle which lies at the base of the Mormon theology, and upon which the whole superstructure has been raised. That principle is belief in the literal inspiration of the Bible. No body of Christians can be found upon the face of the earth that holds this faith more sincerely, more thoroughly, or more consistently. Among the Mormons, far more than among the majority of professed believers in its inspiration, the Bible is constantly appealed to as the unerring standard and test of truth."

Then, after commenting on the common practice among Christian sects, of quietly ignoring certain texts which conflict with particular dogmas or modes of life, he continues:

"Of the Latter-day Saints it must honestly be confessed that they do not thus shrink from pushing their principle to its extreme conclusions. If that principle be erroneous, at any rate it is one that they did not invent, but found already accepted by nearly the whole of Christendom. If the principle be right, but their deductions erroneous, we must meet them on their own ground, and show them wherein their error consists; this is, in fact, the only fair way of dealing with them. Since they are not responsible for their fundamental dogma—the literal truth of the Bible—we must perform our duty, if we would hope to arrive at any impartial judgment concerning the remainder of the system, to admit that dogma as a common postulate. We are reduced, then, to one of three alternatives. Either we must prove that the theologians of Salt Lake have drawn untenable inferences from the words of scripture, or we must admit that their inferences are correct, and become Mormons ourselves. Or, lastly, we must reject the postulate, and build the superstructure of our theology on some other foundation."

But the Mormons are not content with the Bible alone. They contend that the Bible and tradition, without further revelation, are an insufficient guide. By what principle then do they distinguish themselves from other sects of religionists? Lord Amberley says: "What speculative or practical superiority do its adherents claim to possess over other Christians? The answer is that Mormonism claims to possess two great advantages—1. A new revelation; 2. A number of gifts and powers which are not granted to other Christians."

[Continued in our next.]

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