

EXTENSION OF BOUNDARIES.

Speech of Hon. W. H. Hooper, of Utah, delivered in the House of Representatives, February 23, 1869.

(Continued.)

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 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 center 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 front all the settlements 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 prejudices, 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 eighty 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 extension 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 in paying the taxes already so oppressively 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 expropriated; 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 availed 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 expropriation 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 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 property 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 aversion of their neighbors, who impudently 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.

(To be continued.)

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