



GEORGE Q. CANNON.....EDITOR

Wednesday,.....Dec. 18, 1867.

## OUR CITY GOVERNMENT—PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS.

In passing the new city prison lately, which is being erected at the rear of the City Hall, we noticed that it is being rapidly pushed forward to completion. We had some curiosity to know its probable cost, and were informed that the contract had been let for a little rising of thirty thousand dollars, upwards of one-third of which amount has already been paid to Messrs. John Sharp & S. C. Cram, the contractors. Our attention was called to the improvements which have been made in the city by the Corporation, and, though familiar with the city and the unobtrusive manner in which our City Fathers have pursued their work, we were surprised at the large amounts which have been expended. If our community were split up into political factions, and the offices of mayor, aldermen and councilors were the objects of political strife, then the public would have been fully advised of the feats of economy which the party in power had accomplished. Out of such results any amount of capital would have been manufactured by party journals, and the party accomplishing them would have been lauded to the skies and the members been held up as models for other city officers to imitate.

But there has been no necessity here for giving such matters publicity. The public have seen the improvements in progress, and, being lightly taxed, have given themselves no concern as to how the means to make them has been obtained. Direct taxation has not furnished that means. That is readily perceived when it is recollected that one-half of one per cent. is the city tax. Such a tax would not build an elegant City Hall—that would not disgrace any city—at a cost of upwards of sixty thousand dollars. It would not build such a Prison as is now in course of erection; nor such a Bath House and outside improvements, which amount, in the aggregate, to upwards of twenty-five thousand dollars; nor such an aqueduct, at a cost of nearly twenty-five thousand dollars, as now furnishes a safe and beautiful outlet for the waters of City Creek. Such a tax would scarcely pay the police expenses alone of this city, without mentioning the current expenses of the city, the repairing of the streets, which is no inconsiderable item in the city expenses, the management of the water, the fencing and improving of the three public squares, upon which considerably more than ten thousand dollars have already been expended.

There have been some mutterings of discontent, not by old residents of the city, or by persons who have come here to reside, and who have desired to see good order maintained, about the tax which has been put on liquor, and the high rates at which liquor saloon licenses have been charged in this city. Attempts have been made to create prejudice in the East and at Washington against our people, because Great Salt Lake City government has kept the liquor business in its own hands. But these attempts have failed. The policy pursued by the City Council in this matter has vindicated itself. Every man of means in the community must give the city authorities credit for good management, and must acquiesce in their policy when he sees an efficient police force maintained, and the various works of public improvement progressing on every hand, without his having to pay heavy taxes, or the city being involved in debt.

There are very few, if any, who are fond of paying heavy taxes; yet every public-spirited man is proud of good streets, fine public improvements and an orderly, quiet city. If our streets are not yet as good as they will be, we have reason to be proud of our public improvements and the good order and peace that are maintained here, and particularly of the fact that the city is

not encumbered with debt. If the City Council accomplishes these results by limiting the sale of liquor to a few saloons, and charging them high rates of license, or by taxing liquor in any form, we do not think there is any reasonable person who would entertain the least objection to their policy. It lightens taxation and checks the consumption of liquors—two results very greatly to be desired.

We think we are justified in saying that there is not another city on the continent, the finances of which have been managed with such economy and prudence as those of this city of Great Salt Lake. Our City Council, as a body, have from the beginning maintained an irreproachable character. They have not been kept in check by political opponents acting as spies upon their proceedings and criticising every act; but they have carried with them into the Council Chamber the same high sense of honor and conscientious regard for duty that ought to characterize the business dealings of honorable men in private life. Being a public body has not deprived them of individual responsibility or private honor.

## THE RECENT PURCHASE IN THE WEST INDIES.

Our recent telegrams have contained frequent allusions to the purchase by our Government of the Danish possessions in the West Indies. A meeting between the representatives of the United States and Denmark, to complete the arrangements for the transfer, was appointed for the 8th instant, and the probability is that, by this time, the Stars and Stripes float peacefully over the islands. The whole transaction has been kept very quiet by the Government, and very little has appeared respecting it in the public journals. From the best information we can gather on the subject, there are two islands included in this purchase, viz.: St. Thomas and St. John. For these the United States stands committed, through its authorized agents, to pay seven millions five hundred thousand dollars in gold.

The design in purchasing these islands is to establish a depot for supplies for the Atlantic squadron. It will also be of great utility and value to the government in any further naval movements. Such a depot would have been invaluable during the late rebellion. The fleet could have obtained the needed supplies there to have kept in good steaming condition while in chase or search of the rebel privateers. For the want of efficient protection during the war the mercantile marine suffered fearfully, from the depredations of privateers.

Before the transfer of the islands was decided upon, and while the negotiations were pending, the islands were canvassed, on behalf of the United States, to ascertain the sentiments of the inhabitants towards the government of the United States. The merchants, as we learn by telegram, do not like the American tariff; but annexation to the United States is popular with the majority of the people, and they are pleased at the prospect of the transfer.

The Danish West India islands have heretofore comprised St. Thomas, St. Croix (or Santa Cruz) and St. John (or St. Jan.). The island of St. Thomas is situated in latitude 18 degrees 20 minutes north, longitude 64 degrees, 15 minutes west. It contains an area of forty-five miles of rugged and well elevated surface, though there are no very high mountains. It is seventeen miles in length by about five miles in breadth. At one period it was well wooded. The cutting of the timber has had the effect to dry up many of the springs which once irrigated the land. The soil is sandy, and much of it is uncultivated. About twenty-five hundred acres are planted with sugar cane, which produces sugar of an excellent quality. The population is about thirteen thousand souls. There is an extensive trade at St. Thomas, much of the produce of the neighboring islands being sent there for shipment to Europe. It is also the principal station of the West India and European mail steamships, and the United States and South American packets stop there, and some three thousand merchant vessels annually visit the island. St. Thomas is said to be the best location, with the exception of Havana, for a naval station to be found in the whole West India group. Good dockage is afforded for merchant ships, and many have their repairs made there. The town of St. Thomas

is picturesquely situated. Slavery is still in existence on the island, but the slaves are not numerous, being about one to every five whites.

The Island of St. John, (or St. Jan) is but a few miles east of St. Thomas, and contains an area almost equal to that of the latter island. The population numbers about ten thousand. Christiansburg is the principal town.

If a foothold is needed in the West Indies, we like Secretary Seward's plan of obtaining it much better than the filibustering schemes which were so much in vogue a few years since. If an honorable course be taken in securing such of the West India Islands as may be wanted, or the Sandwich Islands, the uneasiness of Spain and other governments will be quieted. The possession of these islands will be advantageous to our ships of war and merchant vessels. The port of St. Thomas already possesses two water batteries and the citadel of Christian Fort. These will doubtless be strengthened, and every precaution be taken to make the acquisition secure. It is probable that the islands will be placed under the charge of a Territorial Governor.

## SALES OF STOCK—THE PROPER POLICY.

From a friend, who has recently come from the Southern part of the Territory, we learn that large herds of stock are being bought up there by various parties and driven westward. We had occasion to call attention to this subject about two weeks since, and deem the matter of sufficient importance to again allude to it. The wealth of our Territory has consisted, to a very great extent, in stock. Our country has possessed a fine range for grazing, and stock-raisers have had but comparatively little trouble in maintaining large herds of animals. In many localities stock has multiplied to a wonderful extent; and there have been instances where stock-owners in their anxiety to increase their wealth in this direction, have neglected other interests. We have heard of men, owners of hundreds of head of cattle and horses, who, rather than sell, were content to live in the meanest of houses and with the shabbiest of furniture, and to suffer their children to grow up with little or no education. They would sacrifice the comfort of themselves and family to gratify their passion for a numerous herd of stock. Such cases, we are happy to think, are not frequent, and recent events are likely to make them still more rare. The Indians have taught the people severe lessons, which they failed to learn by the mild, but more inexpensive, method of public instruction and counsel.

We are told that the stock which has been driven away lately from the South has not been bought with money, but with ready-made clothing, and goods of other kinds, some of them of an inferior quality. These goods the traders have brought with them, and they have driven the stock to Pahrangat and California. Our informant states that he does not know of a single instance in the South where these traders paid money for the stock they bought. We hear, however, of money being offered for cows in this city and neighborhood. We understand there are parties here from the West who want to purchase cows, and pay the money for them. One gentleman was offered a good round price in gold for a lot of cows, but declined having anything to do with the transaction, as he was opposed, on principle, to traders taking droves of cows out of the country. If cows were to be sold in large quantities to be driven away, a serious injury would be inflicted on the country, and that, too, before the people would be aware of what they were doing. Money should not be a temptation to men to strip themselves of their cows. Neither should the people, who live in settlements exposed to Indian raids, in their anxiety to reduce the number of their stock, suffer it to pass out of their hands for goods sold to them at enormous profits. Such a policy is unwise in the extreme—it injures both the individual and the public.

In many settlements there is doubtless too much stock to be properly cared for. Numbers of horses and cattle die annually on the range for the want of their owners' care. If a correct estimate of the yearly loss of stock in this Territory—through the severe winters, the depredations of thieves and the animals straying—could be arrived at, it would surprise those who have not given the subject reflection. This surplus stock might be judiciously disposed of,

and the means accruing therefrom be invested in machinery, etc. If such a course were taken, it would be in every way advantageous; the individual would be benefitted, the Territory would be enriched, and the remaining stock would be likely to receive better care. But in disposing of surplus stock, care should be taken to dispose of it to the best advantage. If traders can come from a distance and buy stock here and drive it off, and make the business pay, our people can certainly drive their own stock to market and dispose of it to advantage. The people of a settlement, or of several settlements, who have surplus stock, can combine, and, after learning where it can be profitably sold, drive it to that market and get the money for it. This subject is worthy of thought, and some such plan as we suggest should be adopted in the settlements.

## GRAIN-SAVING POLICY.

The policy of saving grain and having a good supply of breadstuffs on hand, is one that has been unremittently urged upon the people from the time when grain was first harvested in this valley until the present. The scarcity of food in the first years of the settlement, and afterwards in 1855-6, through the destruction of the crops by grasshoppers, has given point to the counsels of those who have urged this policy upon the people. Every one who shared in the privations of those periods retains very vivid recollections of the straits to which the people were reduced. Provisions could not be obtained from a distance in sufficient quantities to be of any avail; and had the people not been united, and willing to divide one with another, there would have been considerable suffering, and, probably, many deaths from starvation.

Our position is rather a peculiar one. We have no navigable waters, by which communication can be maintained with other countries, or other portions of our own country; we have no railroads; and the only means of transportation is by wagon, with which, over the long distances that stretch between us and other sources of supply, but little could be brought if a failure of crops in this Territory were ever to compel us to have recourse to such a method of obtaining food. If the people of this country, therefore, were to make no provision for the future; but to live from hand to mouth as the working classes of many countries do, a failure of crops here would be attended with most disastrous results. Sufficient relief by importations of food could not be obtained, and gaunt famine would be left to perform its fell work without any possibility of succor. Imagination can readily comprehend the horrors in which the people would be involved under such circumstances.

It has been with a view to avert all possibility of such a calamity that the accumulating of, at least, a year's supply of breadstuffs ahead has been urged so persistently upon the people. There is no better grain-growing district on the continent, that we are acquainted with, than ours. When we have had crops at all there has never been any lack of grain. It has been a drug in the market. Its very abundance has, in the estimation of many, lessened its value. We have heard of money burning holes in people's pockets; but it really has seemed as though some of our people entertained fears of their grain burning up their bins and granaries, they have been so anxious to dispose of it. It has been bartered off for everything that happened to strike the fancy, and at ruinously low figures. If grain thus traded off were kept in the country, it would make but little difference; it would still be here, and, if needed, could be procured. But it has been carried off, and been used up in various ways, placing it entirely out of the reach of the inhabitants of this Territory. Such a practice as this is suicidal.

The plea is made by many that they have been compelled by their necessities to dispose of their grain in this manner. While fully recognizing the existence of such necessities, we still think there is one necessity pressing upon everyone, which is paramount to all others—the necessity of providing food for our wives, children and selves. There is no merely human necessity greater than this. It over-rides all others. Too much can not be said to press this subject home to the minds of the people. At the present time there is a more than usual interest felt respecting this matter. The recent visitation of grasshoppers, and the depositing of their eggs