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## THE ASTRONOMICAL EVENT OF THE YEAR.

On Wednesday, December 6th, an event will occur that has been anticipated with intense interest, and which, if the conditions are favorable for its observation, will be memorable in the annals of astronomical science. It is known as the transit of Venus. We write this for the information of people unfamiliar with the subject, not for scientific folk, nor for those who "know all about it."

The planet Venus, bright that luminary which shines sometimes as a "morning star" and at others as an "evening star," and is recognized by her remarkable effulgence, travels round the Sun in a nearly circular orbit, between the earth and the "ruler of the day." It takes her nearly 225 of our days to make the circuit, moving at the rate of about 22 miles per second. She is the second planet in distance from the Sun, Mercury being the first or nearest, and the Earth the third, unless Vulcan should be counted, the existence of which is not fully established, though confidently declared by the French astronomer, Le Verrier—when Venus would be the third in distance, Vulcan being the first.

Traveling between Earth and the Sun, Venus at certain periods may be observed like a dark ball crossing the Sun's disc. This passage is called the transit. It occurs at peculiar periods. The last transit of Venus took place eight years ago, that is, December 9, 1874, but the next will not occur until the year 2,004, or 121 years, six months and one day after this year's transit. During a cycle of 243 years that planet crosses the disc of the sun four times. The intervals are in regular order 105½, 8 years, 121½ years and 8 years, repeating these periods forever.

The chief interest which attaches to the transit is the opportunity it affords astronomers of taking observations with a view to determining as nearly as possible the exact distance of the earth from the sun. The principles on which this can be calculated cannot easily be explained in a newspaper article. But suffice it to say that the parallax of the sun—or the difference between its position as seen from one point on the earth and another distant point of observation—may be better determined during the transit of Venus across its disc than at any other known period. The earth's diameter being taken as the base of a triangle, the two sides being formed by the lines drawn to a heavenly body from two different points of observation—say on opposite sides of the globe—calculations can be made on known principles by which the distance between the two bodies may be approximately determined. Angular measurement must be made with the utmost accuracy as the variation of a hair's breadth in the calculation of the immense planetary distances, would cause an error of millions of miles.

Observations of the sun will be taken at the exact moment of the appearance of Venus in contact with the sun's disc, at different points of its passage and at the time of its emergence. Its internal and external contacts will be particularly noted, and photographs will be taken by instruments specially designed for the purpose. The transit will be watched at numerous places by ordinary people, and stations have been formed for scientific observation at Washington, Florida, Texas, New Mexico, Santiago, New Zealand, Cape Town and Patagonia under the auspices of the government of the United States, Congress having appropriated \$100,000 for the expenses of these expeditions. Other nations have

contributed their part towards the grand object and from a hundred different stations some of the ablest practical scientific men of the times will view the journey of Venus across the face of the sun, which will be visible from beginning to end in the southern half of North America, all of Mexico and Central America, the West Indies and all of South America and southward to the South Pole in both hemispheres. The South Pole will be visible all over Africa, nearly all over Europe, on the Island of Madagascar, and the Atlantic Ocean from Newfoundland east to Europe. The ending will be seen from the Aleutian to all the South Sea Islands, including New Zealand, Tasmania, and the western half of Australia.

To assist in the work of observation, the most improved apparatus of the age will be brought into use. Among the instruments will be the telescope, the photo-heliograph, the heliostat, the micrometer, the chronograph, etc. The English and French astronomers will rely chiefly on telescopic observation with chronometers for time determination; the Americans and the Germans on the use of the photographic method, and the micrometer and heliometer.

The time of the first contact will be, as seen in Salt Lake City, about twenty-five minutes before seven a.m. About twenty-one minutes will elapse between the external and internal contacts, and it will take nearly six hours to complete the transit. It is to be hoped that the skies will be clear at the places for scientific observation, as so much is expected from it. Cloudy skies will not only cause the useless expenditure of vast sums of money, the waste of valuable time and immense labor in careful preparations for the event, but render abortive the efforts put forth to determine a question of vast importance to astronomical science. The sun's distance is variously estimated by astronomers from 92,230,000 to 92,960,000 miles, a difference of 730,000 miles. And as the distances of the so-called "fixed" stars have to be computed from the sun's distance, the whole theory of celestial measurement depends on the accurate determination of the solar distance.

In reviewing the calculations and errors and efforts of man to discover the laws which govern the starry worlds, their times, distances and relations, we are led to the thought of how easy a knowledge of all these things might be acquired if we had faith like that of Abraham, who gained more knowledge of all these things in a single night, when God showed him the heavens and untold to him their glories and periods and government, than all the astronomers of the nineteenth century have gained from personal observations and the lore of centuries.

However, we hope that all things may be propitious for the observation of the transit, and that the patience and toil and praiseworthy energy devoted to the scientific task of Wednesday may be rewarded as they deserve.

### THE RABID, THE SENSIBLE SATISFIED.

The President's brief allusion to Utah and polygamy in his lengthy message to Congress does not seem to satisfy the rabid clique that presumes to speak for the "Gentiles" of this Territory. But we have not the slightest doubt that the large majority of non-"Mormons" here are of the same opinion as President Arthur. The Edmunds Act has not yet had time for full effect. It is not yet judicially determined how far its influence extends and what are its limits. The action of the Commissioners appointed under its provisions was very sweeping, far more so in our opinion than was intended by the framers of the law.

Surely the disfranchisement of all persons who are or even have been in polygamic relations is sufficient legislation in that direction for the present. It ought to satisfy the most zealous anti-polygamy fanatic in Christendom. President Arthur thinks enough has been done until the full effects of the law are seen, and we believe this will be the view of the greater portion of both Houses of Congress and of the masses of the people all over the Union.

But it is not to be expected that the Utah anti-"Mormons" will rest contented. Why? Simply because it

is not the abolition of polygamy that they are working for. Indeed they would be the sorriest creatures in the Republic, if strictest matters could be so arranged in this Territory that no man could marry or live with more than one woman. Their great pretense would be gone. They would have to get up a new cry wherewith to arouse the religious fanatics and social reformers and maddlers in other people's domestic affairs. They have not desired the abolition of polygamy. What they are after is complete and supreme control of Utah, politically and financially. Although they form such a ridiculous minority, they will never be satisfied till they govern the great majority. Modesty never troubles them. Local popular troubles have no influence with them. Greed and ambition are their motive powers, and they have set their faces like a flint towards the capture of a promising and already wealthy Territory that they may become its rulers, tax-gatherers and official devourers. There never was a greater sham than their howl about "polygamy," and they are afraid unto trembling lest the Edmunds law, in its practical workings, should really have a palpable effect upon the marital relations of the people whom they desire to bring into bondage.

They now feel quite dependent. The President's remarks indicate that he does not join in the rabid and insensate hue and cry against the "Mormon" people, but takes the country at its word and simply aims at the suppression of polygamy as the object popularly desired. But the clique which pulls the wires that make the pulpit jumping jacks and puppets of the press keep up such a rattle and a racket, ready to bite off the President's head for daring to dissent from their anti-"Mormon" demands. The Secretary of the Interior, too, whose opinion is supposed to have influenced the Presidential utterances on this question, comes in for his share of hatred and defamation, and no doubt when the full report of the Utah Commissioners appears, those gentlemen will be denounced because they do not urge such extreme measures as would work into the hands of the few unprincipled and hungry schemers that have marked Utah as their meat.

But we have no plaudits or anathemas to utter. We doubt not that attacks will continue to be made upon the people of this Territory, because they have a religion essentially different from the creeds which have made captive the millions of devotees to sectarianism. But at the same time we have no doubt about the result. God is at the head of this work vulgarly called "Mormonism," and He will so overrule the acts of men and governments, that His people will have breathing and growing time between the assaults that may be made upon them. And everything that is done for their destruction will tend to unite and strengthen them for the work to which they are called, and the result will eventually be—although reached peradventure through deep trial, great threatenings and much affliction—the triumph of truth, the overthrow of evil and mischief, and the establishment of righteous dominion in all the earth. "The Lord God Omnipotent reigneth!"

### TWO DIFFERENT CLASSES OF LEGAL VOTERS.

Rhode Island, at a recent election, voted on a proposition to abolish the clause in her constitution which imposes a property qualification for the elective franchise on all foreign-born citizens. There were 9,520 persons who cast their ballots on this question, and of these 5,122 voted against the amendment, so it was lost. It was not a party movement, as Democrats joined Republicans in opposition to a change.

We refer to this as an illustration of the principle for which we have argued in relation to the laws of this Territory governing the elective franchise. Male voters are required to be tax-payers, women voters are not. It has been objected that the principle of uniformity is not carried out in this arrangement, and that therefore either the tax-paying qualification for male citizens is void, or women voters must also be taxpayers. Some wyers and

judges have taken one view of it and some the other.

We have contended that uniformity must prevail over each class of voters, but need not over the whole group of classes. That is, if one woman voter is exempt from tax-paying others must be; and if one male voter is required to be a taxpayer, other male voters must be taxpayers. But as the male and female voters constitute two separate classes of citizens, the qualification required for one class need not of necessity be required of the other class. Just as it is in regard to citizenship. Male aliens must go into court and obtain certain papers in order to become naturalized; women aliens become naturalized by marrying citizens, without going into court or getting any papers at all. The law is uniform as to each class, but not to the whole group of classes.

In Rhode Island the law requires foreign-born citizens to possess a certain amount of property in order to be qualified to vote, while native-born citizens are exempt from the property qualification. The people have refused to change the law. But if the principle for which some of our jurists contend is good, then the Rhode Island requirement of foreign-born citizens is void. But it has prevailed there for many years and is now confirmed by continuation, and similar differences of qualifications for different classes of voters have existed in other States. Let our Utah legal luminaries reflect upon it at their leisure.

### THE COMMISSIONERS' REPORT.

We publish to-day the report of the Utah Commissioners to the Secretary of the Interior. It is a well written paper, because it goes right to the heart of the questions in relation to which the Commission is supposed to have been appointed. We say supposed, because there has been a great deal of inference and theory connected with its position and proceedings. The Commissioners derived such powers as they possess solely from the Edmunds law. Careful examination of the text of that enactment shows that they are simply authorized to appoint officers to fill the vacancies created by the ninth section of the law, namely, the registration and election officers of every description in this Territory; to receive and canvass the returns of the election of members of the Legislative Assembly; and to issue certificates of election to the eligible persons who shall appear to have been lawfully elected. Their office is to continue until the Legislative Assembly shall make provision for the filling of the registration and election officers.

In their report the Commissioners assume that they were "charged by the Act of Congress with the duty of excluding from the polls and from eligibility to office of a certain class of persons;" that is, polygamists, bigamists, and those guilty of unlawful cohabitation. But this duty is not enjoined upon them by the language of the law, it can only be claimed by inference. They are forbidden to exclude persons from the polls on account of opinion on the subject of bigamy or polygamy, and to refuse to count a vote on account of such opinion. It is only by inferring from this that they may exclude practical bigamists and polygamists from the polls, that they have the slightest coloring of law to justify their action in this regard. And a close following of the text will show that even if this inference is just, it can only apply to the election for members of the Legislative Assembly, as that is the only election whose returns they are authorized to receive and canvass.

They say in reference to the exclusion of certain persons from the polls, "How this was to be done was not defined in the Act." Just so, because the duty of this exclusion was not conferred upon them by the Act. But having formed the idea that they were "charged" with this duty, they had to conclude that "Congress intended to leave the manner of executing it to their discretion."

This, it will be perceived, is all theory and inference. We do not say that the Commissioners were wrong in their conclusions as to the intention of Congress in their appointment, but we agree with them that they cannot find the definition of such powers in the Act of Congress which created their office. And if they had carried out

in this respect the rule which they claim to have adopted in others, that is, to "conform to the well known canons for the construction of statutes," it appears to us that they would not have found authority for much that they considered was expected of them.

Also it is very doubtful if by following those "canons" they would have found authority for making new legislation to carry out an inferential duty. They assumed that they were required to exclude polygamists, etc., from the polls, and not finding the means in the local or congressional statutes, they added to the law by their supplementary oath, which was certainly a new piece of legislation, enacted by a body having no legislative powers whatever. To carry this point still further, the supplementary oath which they devised went beyond and outside even the design of the Edmunds law. Supposing they were authorized to exclude certain persons from the polls, and that in the exercise of that authority they had the right to legislate, whence did they derive the power to exclude persons from the polls who cohabited with more than one woman "in the marriage relation" only, thus admitting persons who cohabited with more than one woman out of "the marriage relation," and manifestly changing the letter and meaning of the Act of Congress? The words "in the marriage relation" do not occur in the Edmunds law, and were inserted in the oath framed by the Commissioners, to discriminate between persons who cohabited with plural wives and those who cohabited with any number of females to whom they were not married, in favor of the latter class. This may all be in accordance with what was expected of the Commission, but it cannot be made to appear in consonance with the law which authorized its appointment, construing it "according to the well-known canons."

The Commissioners offer several suggestions which will no doubt receive consideration. Although nothing is said in the law in relation to this, it was naturally expected that, having been on the spot and studied the situation in Utah, they would offer such recommendations as in their view would aid in accomplishing the object desired by the Government. They have done so frankly, but in a manner free from harshness and that radical animus which certain parties desired to arouse, and for the absence of which they will no doubt condemn the gentlemen who declined to come under their dictation. But we fail to see the relevancy of their hint as to the advisability of abolishing woman suffrage in Utah, to the subject of the suppression of polygamy. They declare that the efforts of the Commission have been successful "so far in that direction, and that this is the only object they have in view, because the 'law is not framed against the religion of the Mormons, but against polygamy,' and that they are not in favor of measures 'destructive of the rights of local self-government.' The women voters of Utah being now all monogamists, how can the continuance of the law which confers upon them the suffrage be considered 'an obstruction to the speedy solution of the vexed question?'"

If the object to be attained is to reduce the "Mormon" majority at the polls, something will be accomplished by taking away from women the right to vote. But upon what plea can this be advocated unless it is on the ground of their religion? If the "vexed question" is polygamy, woman suffrage in Utah will not help to solve it, because no polygamous question is involved in their voting, and no polygamous woman is allowed to vote. If the "vexed question" is the majority of "Mormons," which prevents a small minority from controlling the Territory, then the abolition of woman suffrage here might be a step towards solving it. But it would not meet the end desired. The Commissioners put the population of the Territory at 150,000 and the number of non-"Mormons" of all classes at 40,000. The latter number is much too high, but granting it correct, does not this leave a very large majority of "Mormons" after deducting the very high figure—12,000 at which the Commission puts the disfranchised "Mormons?" Make all the deductions that can be reasonably suggested, the female vote included, and the "vexed question" would remain unsolved, unless the sacred principle of local self-