

THE EDITOR'S COMMENTS.

AMNESTY AND PARDON.

The overruling hand of God in the destinies and experiences of His Saints has been seen and realized times without number in the brief but eventful history of this Church. Especially during the last few years have these manifestations of His power, compassion and mercy been multiplied in our behalf. The manner in which the calm has been made to succeed the storm has been marvelous in our eyes; and the promptness and completeness with which bitterness has been supplanted by friendship, and animosity by charity, has been an evidence to all who see by the eye of faith, that divinity has shaped our ends, and that poor, finite man is but an agent and a means in carrying out the plans of Omnipotence.

Quite in line with this marvelous change referred to, and as another glowing instance of the tender solicitude and love of Him whom the Saints have elected to serve, is the late proclamation of the President of the United States granting amnesty, pardon and the restoration of civil rights to all who may have come under the legal ban imposed by well-known congressional enactments against the practice of plural marriage, provided they have complied with the terms of the proclamation on the same subject nearly two years ago by the preceding President. Mr. Cleveland takes up the matter of pardon where Mr. Harrison laid it down, and carries it to the utmost limit of his executive powers. Previous conviction and punishment under the laws alluded to, are no longer, under the terms of his proclamation, a bar either to the suffrage or to the holding of office. Of course the special reference in the registration oath to the two laws of Congress on the subject of polygamy and unlawful cohabitation is not expunged—it could not be save by the repeal of the laws themselves, which is a matter entirely outside the prerogative of the President. While those laws are in force it is equally evident that no proclamation can legalize the practice of polygamy or "unlawful cohabitation" even where the prohibited relations had been previously entered into. But everything else toward removing the disabilities thereby incurred, and toward restoring and re-establishing the rights and privileges of citizenship, as well as exemption from prosecution, is by this proclamation decisively and unreservedly "one." The construction placed upon its terms by the Utah Commission is proof that we do not exaggerate the extent of it; that body has ordered stricken from the registration oath the clause which reads: "And I further swear that I am not a bigamist or polygamist, and that I have not been convicted of any crime under the act of Congress entitled 'an act' etc." It deserves to be said in this connection

that it is within public memory that there have been registration oaths presented in which there was no reference to conviction whatever; and instances might be cited where, no longer than a year ago, men who actually had been convicted were assured that they could safely take the oath and were solicited to do so. While, therefore, there seems in the latest oath to have been this much doubt as to the scope of President Harrison's amnesty, all such doubt will be removed by the explicit terms of President Cleveland's document. There of course remains the clause in which the applicant for registration promises to support and faithfully obey the Constitution and laws of the United States, "especially the laws in reference to bigamy and for other purposes," etc.; but, as above stated, those laws require that such an oath be taken, and only by their repeal can it be expunged from registrations conducted under them.

That this important proceeding in the healing of recent wounds will be hailed with joy and gratitude by the Mormon people and by their friends, scarcely need be reiterated. Their thanks were due and were expressed to President Harrison whose proclamation, at a time when it required courage to issue it, has been alluded to. Their thanks are due now to President Cleveland and those whose kindly advice in this matter he has accepted. The present favor was no doubt easy to grant, for there could have been found few to oppose it. But the act is none the less appreciated nor the less friendly on that account, and it reflects high credit upon every one who had a part in it. Above all should the Saints address their thanksgivings and supplications to Him who moves and directs men's minds, and controls all things as seemeth to Him good.

The answering of two questions from a Mill Creek correspondent is now made easy. He writes:

Please answer through the NEWS for the benefit of your readers the following two questions:

1st—The Copper act—does it save a man's franchise?

2nd—For committing a misdemeanor and being proven guilty, does a man lose his franchise?

Cohabitation is a misdemeanor; many have been sent to the penitentiary for it; they have behaved themselves and for their good conduct their sentence has been shortened, condoned,—they did not serve their full time of sentence. If there are such who are not cohabiting with any but their lawful wife today, can they register and vote?

Our correspondent also asks concerning the status of a man who was convicted of polygamy and served three years of his term, being pardoned before the term expired. The answer to this is that such pardon carried with it the restoration of civil rights, and such person, provided he could subscribe to the other portions of the oath, was entitled to register and vote.

As to the questions above quoted, the answer to the first one is that the copper act of itself carries with it no

restoration of rights; its benefits are accorded as a reward of good conduct in prison; and a man's legal status upon completing a term shortened by a few months under the provisions of the copper act, would be precisely the same as if he had served to the very last hour the term to which he had been sentenced.

As to the second question, the terms of the laws relating to polygamy and unlawful cohabitation forbade the franchise to those guilty of those offenses, and President Harrison's proclamation of amnesty, while intended to favor those who were willing to apply for it and who had not been guilty of the offenses named since a date two years and two months previous, was held by many to offer no restoration to those who had been convicted, though, as we have above shown, the Utah Commission of that time seemed to hold a contrary view. President Cleveland's proclamation of yesterday expressly includes these, and restores all the rights they have lost by reason of such conviction; and there would seem to be room for no further cavil about it.

HOW TO DEAL WITH THEM.

Another instance now comes to public attention of an individual of the male persuasion who came in from the country, made his way to a den of infamy, lost his money, and now asks the officers to prosecute the female companion of his revelry for having robbed him of his cash. Just what claim such "suckers"—as individuals of this class are vulgarly though not inappropriately termed—have to official sympathy does not appear clear. They come to the city to see "the elephant," and see it in violation of morality, decency and law. If in their gambling or other procedure they consider themselves winners, they go off uncomplainingly, perhaps to return at some other time. But if they get the worst of it, they suddenly become very virtuous, call on the officers to help them out of their dilemma, and if assistance is not given to this end, they raise a bowl about "official negligence."

It may be suggested that it is the business of officers to prosecute offenders against the law when a complaint is made. That is true in the sense of vindicating public authority and respect. But it is not an officer's business to engage in prosecutions which afford no hope of conviction and only put the public to needless expense. In cases like that referred to, the word of one party is as good as another, and so far as known the public prosecutor could institute proceedings only with the certainty of being beaten. Usually when these are begun and the fleeced individual gets back a share of his money through the influence of official threats, he disappears from the scene, leaving the public to pay the costs.

Persons who place themselves in the position referred to have no right to official aid or sympathy. When they start out on their sprees, the more completely they are robbed the bet-