

## THE EDITOR'S COMMENTS.

### LIBERTY IN UTAH.

An anonymous correspondent in a country town clips from the Democratic organ in this city a paragraph printed just before the city election, which contains a declaration to the effect that the voters of this State are free to vote for whom they may see fit, and that no man "has authority conferred upon him by God, or given him of men, to interfere with the freedom of the individual in the exercise of his political rights," and forwards it to this office. Of course this was a fling at the Mormon Church authorities. Referring to the clipping the correspondent says: "This is the kind of talk to have!"

Yes, indeed, this is the kind of talk to have, if it is desired to spread over the world the impression that Utah is inhabited by serfs and ruled by half-civilized chiefs, who hold the masses in slavery. If the object is to make the world believe that Utah is a region whose denizens can neither read nor write, and among whom patriotism is an unknown virtue; that they have no conception of the meaning of liberty, and that statehood was a stupendous blunder, this is the kind of talk Utah papers should indulge in.

If it is desired persistently to insult the members of the dominant religious society of the State, and if the purpose is to try to goad them or their leaders into some sort of retaliation, by all means keep up this kind of talk. Keep on reminding the members of that society that they are now free; that quite recently the shackles have been stricken from their limbs. Give them to understand that, whereas they came to Utah as serfs, and lived here nearly half a century as slaves, somebody by some means has successfully consummated some sort of a process of emancipation in their behalf, so that now, if they venture to go to the polls, no blood hounds will follow them, and if they even vote as they please, they need stand in no fear of the whipping post, for it is a thing of the past.

For six long, weary years, ever since the voters of Utah divided on national political lines, the assertion has been incessantly reiterated that they are now free. First some scribbler for a political organ makes it; then some stump speaker, whose mouth and brain are sadly out of proportion as to size, repeats it; then some patent outside sheet takes it up; and so on ad nauseum. This statement is usually accompanied by the further one that the leaders of the Mormon people have given the latter permission to vote the ticket of their choice. Why not further inform a wondering world that those magnanimous leaders have given their followers permission to breathe, eat and sleep; the males among them to wear pants, and the females to seek the bargain counter, as early and as often as purse may permit or inclination dictate? The villainous slander implied in this rubbish is all that saves it from being the veriest imbecility.

Ye venerable Pioneers, whose faith is like that of the children of Israel crossing the red sea; whose patriotism is like that of the martyrs of Thermopylae; whose devotion is like that of the Pilgrim Fathers; whose courage is like that of the noble six hundred of Balaklava; ye gray haired veterans who laid among the mountains the corner stones of a grand commonwealth, and made it possible for pro-

fessional politicians and other social pests and parasites to exist here, what think ye when some scribbler publishes to the world the gratifying news that "now"—quite recently—ye are free? And when that scribbler's twin brother, with short scrubby hair and a low, retreating forehead, effects a thrilling escape from a beer saloon, climbs a stump, and before an aggregation of his fellow water-shunning loafers reiterates the asseveration that the Mormons "now" are free, what emotions surge within you? Could you give adequate utterance to them? Hardly.

O, the unspeakable satire of the situation! Scribblers with not an inspiration which they do not get from some political boss; with not a scintilla of patriotism apart from party spoils; with not an idea of public policy loftier than the scheme of a ward heeler; with not a conception of human liberty that would do credit to a Turk, brazenly inform the Mormon people that freedom now prevails in Utah, and exhort them to act upon it by voting for conspirators and spoilsmen! Stump speakers, so craven in their cowardice that they dare not utter publicly a sentiment that has not first been passed upon by their steering committee, and whose souls are held in such abject slavery to the party lash that rather than risk a blow from it they would stultify themselves in the grossest manner possible, and throw personal honor to the winds; such creatures have the impudence to stand before the sturdy Mormon yeomanry and warn them to take no counsel in politics that does not emanate from self-seeking aspirants who offer not the slightest guarantee of good faith in the advice they give to voters!

Before such creatures as these scribblers and spouters existed in Utah, the Mormon people had established liberty here, and had taught mankind that the American voter is as independent in his sphere as Caesar was in his. Religiously they taught that independent and intelligent action in all the affairs of life in this world is a sine qua non of salvation in the next. For the sake of liberty they endured more than death, and they maintained it until conspiring politicians organized political machines that have seriously invaded it. But as things are even now, they can call all mankind to witness that there is no restraint upon liberty in Utah save the tyranny of the party boss and the certainty of the party lash.

To this last statement one exception must be made. There are voters in Utah, some hundreds in number, who are not free. They are permitted to vote, but if they allow it to be known how they vote, a storm ensues; and if they venture to advise others, in public or in private, how to vote, the storm becomes a hurricane. The injustice and absurdity of all this is vastly augmented when it is understood that of all the men in the State, of any creed or calling, these are the best qualified to counsel the people in matters that relate to their material welfare.

Not by law, it is true, but scarcely less effectively than by legislative enactment, the mouths of these men have been closed, and their personal liberties have been curtailed in their associations and conversations with their fellow citizens. So far has this condition gone that when one of them, in approaching the polls to cast his ballot, permitted a by-stander to see what ticket he voted, the incident was

seized by stump speakers and a partisan press and treated as if a crime had been committed; and the venerable American citizen who cast the vote was censured as a criminal might be.

For years these men have borne this deprivation of their dearest rights as American citizens. They have seen the politician accomplish his nefarious purposes, they have seen the people robbed and oppressed, they have seen imperilled the credit and fair fame of the commonwealth among whose founders they were numbered, and for whose welfare they feel a solicitude more true, deep and profound than their detractors are capable of conceiving, and yet have remained silent. Out of deference to senseless and outrageous prejudice, they have foregone their privileges, preferring any sacrifice rather than become a disturbing element. In the meantime the State has been the loser immeasurably by their silence; for their wisdom and counsel would have averted much of what the people are now suffering and must yet suffer.

The patriot in Utah may well yearn for the day when truth, justice and reason will be controlling elements in shaping public opinion and directing public affairs.

### HOLDING THE SCHOOL ELECTION.

In the absence of Attorney General Bishop, Attorney B. X. Smith is performing the duties of the State official. In response to an inquiry from the State superintendent of schools, Dr. Park, Mr. Smith has given an opinion on the holding of the school election, and incidentally he advises that this city be divided into election districts as the county commissioners have done, with at least one voting place in each municipal ward. Just what the deputy attorney general is getting at does not appear clear from his opinion, which certainly throws no light on the interpretation of the law. If he means to advise that there be a voting place in each of the election districts under such division, then his counsel is directly against the well known intent of the Legislature as to an absolute rule, and is a suggestion for gross extravagance in election expense. If, on the other hand, he means that the board of education shall re-district the city, and then have all the voters in each municipal ward come from their various election districts to one voting place, he advises a great amount of useless work, in view of the districts already created.

In a municipal or general election in this city, there are fifty-two polling places, with an expense for judges and halls of \$900 or more. With five polling places, the expense is about one-tenth that sum. That represents the proportionate difference between Mr. Smith's advice and the procedure of the past. Which will the board of education adopt?

There will be no dispute that the board of education can accept the greater expense if it chooses; but the law does not require it. It gives the discretion between five and fifty-two polling places and sets of judges. The school law modifies the general election law in certain particulars. One of these is that, instead of having one voting place for each 300 voters, there may be provided "one voting place in each municipal ward." There cannot be less than that. Then there are modifications as to the ballot, envelopes, printing, etc., which virtually exclude the Australian system in its entirety. Even the use of the cross to designate the voter's choice is eliminated, and the elector is to designate on a single ballot "the name of the person or per-