

DESERET NEWS

WEEKLY.

TRUTH AND LIBERTY.

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THEIR SIDE OF IT.

A mass meeting of Mormon women in favor of the doctrines of plural marriage was lately held in Salt Lake City. About 1,200 women attended the meeting. No men were present except the reporters, and very few Gentile women were among the audience. From what we can gather, the meeting was fairly representative. And what do these women, who must know the meaning of plural marriage from experience, say in regard to "the twin relic"? They were enthusiastic in their approval of it as a company of Methodists would be over class meetings. They declared plural marriage to be a divine institution and one that was fraught with blessings to them. This declaration does not prove the fact; for we know that many hateful social curses, have, before now, been declared blessings. But the distinction to be drawn is that those who profited by the social curse have heretofore praised it, while here, on the other hand, the supposed victims are the eulogists. We do not remember to have heard that during the existence of slavery the slaves held a mass meeting to praise the peculiar institution. Perhaps this mass meeting simply bears witness to the excellence of Mormon discipline. If so, that discipline can not only keep unruly passions in check, but can change human nature. There can certainly be no objection to agitation against the doctrine of plural marriages—there is every reason in favor of discussing the question in all its forms. A doctrine of this kind cannot justly claim immunity from criticism. But discussion is one thing and repression is another. The people of the United States should carefully avoid anything that savors of oppression for conscience sake. Majorities may shift. The minority of to-day may be in the majority to-morrow. If it is once declared that the majority may prescribe the opinions of the minority, what hope would there be of the continuance of toleration. The practice of plural marriage may be denounced as very odious and reprehensible. And yet there are millions of Mohammedans in India who are polygamists and at the same time good subjects of Her Majesty, the Queen of Great Britain and Empress of India. The British authorities do not attempt to change their opinions nor degrade this practice into a crime. A practice might be odious and barbarous and yet it might be better to permit it to die out through growth in civilization than to root it out by fire and sword.

The above is clipped from the N. Y. Graphic of Nov. 26th. A previous number of that illustrated paper contained views of several prominent buildings in this city, and a well written description and historical sketch of Utah, undisfigured with any of the nonsense and abuse which generally accompany such contributions to newspaper literature.

The Graphic has placed this subject very fairly before its wide circle of readers. We fully endorse the proposition that "there is every reason in favor of discussing the question of plural marriage in all its forms." We do not claim for this doctrine "immunity from criticism." On the contrary we invite it. But, as the Graphic says, "discussion is one thing and repression another." The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has never objected to the discussion of any of its principles. It has thrown open its meeting houses and tabernacles to prominent orthodox divines who were vehemently opposed to its principal tenets. It appeals only to the conscience and the judgment of mankind. It attempts to use no force in the promulgation of its doctrines, and therefore repels any repressive measures on the part of its enemies.

"The practice of plural marriage" is denounced as very odious and reprehensible." But denunciation and proof are as different from each other as discussion and repression. And it speaks very little for the talents of the champions of enforced monogamy, or else for the position they assume, that all their efforts against plural marriage partake of the nature of force rather than of argument. Some of them call for the sword, others for mob violence, and the most of them for penalties and prisons to put it down.

Is it not a little singular, if the marriage system of Christendom is so much superior to the "Mormon" method as is claimed, that its immense advantages cannot be made apparent to us, with all the facilities at the command of "Christian" churches, societies, ministers, missionaries, journals, tracts, money, and ability? Why is it that the professed disciples of Jesus appeal, not to the Christian gospel, but to the secular law? They do not attempt to convert, but are anxious to punish us. And yet it is generally admitted that the "Mormons" are sincere in their convictions of the truth of their system. Those convictions have cost many of them homes, friends and native land. The proofs of their sincerity stand up in shining prominence before the world. The imputations of their most forward opponents spring from base and greivelling natures, and are the offspring of low and bestial suspicions generated in the imaginations of the depraved and defiled.

Does it not seem probable that a body of religionists who are as industrious as they are devoted and believing could be reached by reason better than by force? The people who come here from various nations are not gathered up as mere emigrant colonists, with the sole object of bettering their temporal condition. They are all, except the very youthful, persons who have become convinced that the religious system popularly known as "Mormonism" is a divine establishment, and they flock to Utah as its centre and chief sanctuary. Such people can be approached by argument and scripture. But any kind of compulsion is persecution in their eyes, and only tends to exasperate them in their faith and give them determination and resistance. They naturally reason within themselves that force is attempted in the absence of logic; that threats and prisons are used to supply the place of proofs and Biblical quotations. Who can say that they are not right as well as consistent?

This periodical outcry against the "Mormons" is started by a very few and very insignificant individuals. It begins in Salt Lake City, and, catching the popular ear and being in accord with popular sentiment founded on popular ignorance, it soon swells into a great noise, but generally subsides, like loud thunder unattended by lightning, and doing as little appreciable damage. The object of its originators is self. Utah can be made a rich Territory or State. If the "Mormons" could be driven out as they were from Missouri and Illinois, either by mob violence or repressive laws executed by hostile officials, the conspirators imagine that they would fall into a fat thing. Offices, real estate, municipal and general treasuries, control of the whole region and its resources. No matter how much it may be denied, this is the whole matter in a nutshell. Our faith, our marriage relations, our peculiarities of doctrine or practice, have no real bearing upon them nor the nation. They affect us alone, and, as we consider, favorably. The pretext of delivering the "down-trodden plural wives" is the paltriest kind of rubbish; the "Mormon" women do not want to be "delivered" in any way that their pretended champions can help them, but ask to be let alone to carry out what they most certainly believe to be a divine command. The legislation demanded, the general pressure called for, have for their object the personal emolument of a few adventurers and nothing else. And if the excited "Christians" of different denominations will only pause and reflect, and endeavor to be guided by the spirit of the Nazarene in their assault on what they conceive to be gross error, they will hesitate about playing into the hands of a few plotters, who care no more for God and truth than they do for the notes in our glittering sunbeams, or the little midges

that float on the bosom of our saline lake.

Let them agitate if they choose. Let them criticize, denounce, argue, ridicule and berate if they will. But let all Christian sects beware how they aid in the introduction of religious repression into the scheme of government in this country. For interference with the freedom of conscience and action of the "Mormons," will prove the thin end of the wedge of bigotry and intolerance, that will ultimately be driven home to the very heart of every sect but that which, at some not distant date, happens to be the dominant ecclesiastical system of the country. Their side of the question will, about that time, be as important to them, as our side of it is now to us.

TAX COLLECTION.

PROMPT payment of lawful taxes is one mark of the worthy citizen. Yet there are many persons who try to shirk this positive duty, and they will often be found charging others with violation of law. The taxes in this Territory are light and reasonable, and assessments are made in the spirit of fairness and equity. Provision is made by law for the correction of any errors of assessment and for equalizing valuations. Therefore those who fight against the payment of taxes have no valid excuse, but place themselves unreasonably in opposition to the law and to the general welfare of the community.

Enforced collection of taxes may seem harsh to the unthinking, and there are always demagogues at hand to try to inflame the popular mind against those whose duty it is to execute the law? Sensible and just people, however, will always despise those who attempt to throw discredit on public officers for acting in the discharge of their duties, which are often very disagreeable to perform.

The new revenue law provides for the following *ad valorem* annual tax:

"Three mills on the dollar for territorial purposes; three mills on the dollar for the benefit of district schools; and such sum as the County Courts of the several Counties may designate for County purposes, not to exceed six mills on the dollar."

The Collector is required to notify every taxpayer of the amount of his tax, and when and where it is payable. And it is made the Collector's duty to levy upon enough of the taxable, personal property of those who fail to pay their taxes by the 31st day of October, to pay the taxes and costs, and proceed to sell the same in manner provided by the statute. The Collector is under oath and bonds to perform this duty, and he should be sustained in it by all who desire the well-being of society.

It is unnecessary for us to dwell upon the necessity of revenue to the existence and continuance of every municipal, county, territorial and state organization. But we must express our contempt for men who know the importance of local taxes and their collection, who not only seek to escape from the common duty of citizens, but to throw blame and obloquy upon the sworn officers of the law, who merely act for the benefit of the public at large.

NO "COMFORT" IN THE "ORUMB."

THE late election law in this Territory, which did good service for many years, insuring free, fair and incorruptible elections, was vehemently assailed by a small minority of citizens, most of them new-comers, because of the marked ballot, which was one of its salient features. The law was repealed and a new statute enacted, abolishing that element of the old law which was deemed objectionable.

But in throwing away the strongest safeguard to the purity of the ballot box, our legislators did not fail to build up another. Registration was adopted as the next best protection. But this did not suit the objectors to the marked ballot. They were and are as bitterly op-

posed to the registration as to the former system, because it leaves them no chance to stuff the ballot boxes, nor to turn an actual minority into an apparent majority by means of any of the tricks with which professional politicians are familiar.

While Utah was discarding the marked ballot, other Legislatures were adopting it. Among them the State of Minnesota introduced it, to counteract the fraudulent voting which is so common in all the large cities of the Union. But the plan met with fierce opposition, as might have been expected, and a legal raid was made upon it. A test case was tried in the District Court of Ramsey County, Minnesota, when the act authorizing the marked ballot was pronounced unconstitutional, "being in violation of the right of voters to cast a secret ballot." This was a very singular ruling, and serves to show that Utah is not the only place where Judges, supposed to be learned and sound, are sometimes afflicted with apparent aberration of intellect.

We have not learned as yet the result of this litigation. It is not likely that the State authorities will accept this decision as final. For the Constitution says nothing about a secret ballot. It does not even directly provide that voting shall be done by ballot at all. But in voting for President and Vice President of the United States, the electors are required by the Twelfth Amendment to name the persons voted for to fill each office "in distinct ballots." Thus, incidentally, the Constitution provides for voting by ballot in this one instance. But voting in the several States and Territories for their own officers, is left to the different local Legislatures to regulate by local statutes. There is not anything in the Constitution which bears in any way against the marked ballot, or requires the ballot to be used in voting at any election for State or Territorial officers. If there is we should like to have it pointed out.

When, therefore, a Judge, in the interests of party, pronounces unconstitutional a law or proceeding about which the Constitution is perfectly silent, he only makes himself an object of ridicule and reproach. And those who gloat over such a decision because of its incidental bearing upon a defunct statute of Utah, exhibit simply an urgent necessity for the smallest crumb of comfort that may drop within their cognizance, and a painful eagerness to seize it, no matter how far they may have to travel in order to reach the deceptive morsel.

THE GRAND JURY AND SANITARY MEASURES.

WE notice that the grand jury which has just closed its labors, having worked industriously and assiduously, gives some recommendations to our municipal authorities, in regard to sewerage. It appears that grand juries, while there is much talk in the country favoring their entire abolition, are becoming more important and suggestive. The grand jury of the previous term took up subjects and made recommendations that were so entirely outside of the province of such bodies, as to occasion much fun at its expense. We may reasonably expect that if grand juries continue to enlarge the sphere of their deliberations, they will, by and by, attempt an argumentative solution of the "Mormon" problem, settle the Indian question, offer disquisitions on the currency, give opinions on the destruction of the grasshoppers and the codlin moth, and make recommendations of a judicial, legislative, scientific, philosophical and medical character for the removal of all the ills that flesh is heir to.

The powers of grand juries in this Territory are defined by Act of Congress as follows:

"The grand jury must inquire into the case of every person imprisoned within the district on a criminal charge and not indicted; into the condition and management of the public prisons within the district; and into the wilful, corrupt misconduct in office of public officers of every description within the district; and they are also entitled to free access, at all reasonable times, to the public prisons, and to

the examination, without charge, of all public records within the district." (See "Poland bill" Sec. 4.)

The general powers of grand juries, as laid down by legal authorities, do not include the various branches of investigation, opinion and advice which some of those organizations in later times seem to consider within their province and an essential part of their business. Criminal conduct is their proper main point of inquiry. And it seems to us that if, when criminal charges were not under consideration, "the wilful, corrupt misconduct of public officers of every description" was made the subject of committee work, instead of matters that are foreign to the jurisdiction of grand juries, it would not only be in better keeping with the law and consonant with good taste, but more conducive to the public welfare.

Now, we have no fault to find with the suggestions in relation to sewerage in this city. They exhibit a praiseworthy regard for the health of the people. But we merely suggest that it is quite as well for all public functionaries to keep within the line of the duties required of them by law, and discharge fully all the obligations imposed upon them, as to step over that boundary to handle subjects which, however pressing they may require ventilation, do not properly belong to them in their official capacity.

A committee of the grand jury was appointed by the body to examine and make a report of the sanitary condition of Salt Lake City. The report of that committee states that:

"There is such an excess of filth and accumulation of foul and unhealthy matter, that, if no speedy remedy is applied, it must very greatly endanger the health of the inhabitants of said city."

This complaint we believe to be well founded. But the committee not only find the fault but very consistently propose a cure. They express the opinion that,

"The only effectual remedy against the evils would be an efficient system of sewerage, and we would strongly recommend the authorities of Salt Lake City to give this subject their earliest attention. In our opinion, one main of sewerage ought to be laid down, commencing at the junction of First South and East Temple, running thence south to some suitable place below the city; and afterwards such other mains be laid down as circumstances may require."

An efficient system of sewerage would certainly be of great sanitary advantage to this city. But we do not think it would fully meet the evils deplored. We have no doubt that much of the disease which afflicts our little ones and runs up the rate of mortality, is traceable to decaying matter, scattered upon the surface of the ground, and which any system of sewerage that this city will be able for some time to establish, would fail to touch in any appreciable degree. Fruit drops from the trees and rots in the orchards; cabbage leaves and other vegetable waste decompose in large quantities; leaves by the million fall upon the ground in the streets and in the gardens and decay; outhouses are left in a filthy state; wells but a few feet from the surface receive organic matter through seepage; accumulations lie in the street sects and the water used by many families becomes impure; through numberless causes the earth in our vicinity is almost covered with impurities, and spores arising from the festering and noisome stuff are inhaled and enter into the blood, poisoning and filling it with the germs of disease and the emissaries of death.

A great deal of this might be avoided or removed. Now is a good time for municipalities to consider the subject in all its bearings. When the heat of next summer comes, it will be too late to institute remedies for that year. We would like to see a system of sewerage established in this city; but not any of the leaky imperfect systems adopted by some of the large cities of the Union, for they have spread more disease than they prevented. And any thorough method will prove too costly for Salt Lake at present. But a scavenger system might be instituted. An ordinance could be passed compelling the citizens to clean up their lots and gardens and