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CONSERVATIVE LEGISLATION.

Utah has acquired a reputation for conservative legislation, whether or not she altogether deserves it in recent years. In the main, however, the disposition of legislative enactments has been against anything of a radical or revolutionary character. This disposition has given confidence in the State for investments of various kinds and has proved efficient as a capital stock for the development of the great resources of this locality.

Experience has shown the wisdom of this conservatism; and now that the first Legislature of the new State is in session, the careful policy of the past ought to be given further sanction. It would be disastrous for the lawmakers to launch out in schemes of a revolutionary and uncertain character, even in response to popular clamor, which does not always indicate the wiser course. Every measure adopted should be carefully scanned, and new ideas or schemes should not be endorsed except with caution and in such a gradual manner as to give no opportunity for unpleasant effects.

One class of legislation in which special conservatism should be displayed is that relating to railway transportation rates. We are fully aware of the fact that railways have not treated Utah fairly on all occasions, and of the further fact that there is a popular demand for them to be brought to time. We are also aware that the cause for complaint is chiefly outside of the State, and cannot be reached by local legislation. Local railway representatives have generally manifested a disposition to be fair, and while sometimes they have been overruled by higher officials outside the State who did not seem to fully sense conditions here, through them many arrangements of a markedly beneficial character have been entered into. And as against all railway abuses that may be named, there stands the undeniable fact that the roads have accomplished a vast amount for the development of the country and convenience of the people, and none of them heretofore seems to be a particularly heavy dividend payer, since all have had more or less experience in the hands of receivers.

In this connection we invite attention to a brief letter of a correspondent in another column, who, while admitting that grievances exist, urges caution in the legislation that proposes to correct them. On our own part we believe it is the determination of the legislature to act with due caution, and yet be courageous in the performance of a plain duty. But influences of various kinds are brought to bear upon them, and in some respects radical measures are demanded for alleged abuses. In this situation there is less danger from too few laws than from overdoing the business; and if the first State Legislature shall adjourn without having adopted anything of a radical nature, but with a record for persistent conservatism, whatever faults it may display will be more readily forgiven and forgotten than if a different course were pursued.

SCIENCE AND BIBLE STATEMENTS.

On this subject Prof. J. E. Thomas, in the Homiletic Review makes the following observations:

It is were ever desirable or possible to deny the use by Scripture writers of language which is conclusively inflexible to accept if taken literally, it is certainly no longer so since the lucidly erudite essays of Gladstone, and that offer by President A. D. White, in his articles on the "Warfare of Science." It is scarcely true, as we affirm, that the heavens are spoken of by them as having "fallen down," both the earth and the heavens as having "spliced," the sun as "rising" and "going down," etc. He might have added that the sun is difficult to have "moved," the waters to contain "abundance" and upon "seas," the clouds to be made into "chariots," and the wind to have "wings," but if the abandonment of metaphor is the essential condition of "necessary" in referring to the facts of the sun, it is doubtful if any modern writer can pretend to scientific veracity. Mr. Darwin certainly made use for his world-famous phrase—"natural selection," "struggle for life," Herbert Spencer, "the law of parsimony," and the like, forbid. Grant Allen, in his charming little "Story of the Plants," just is not, categorically declare that they "teach by the teaching of natural selection" what kind of leaves it is most desirable to produce, nor they "take care in these away no valuable material;" that the trees providently "arrange for the fall of their leaves," in the most wholesome way, etc. He would, no doubt, be surprised to hear that he had therefore been cited as engaged in "mockery" against science; his language plainly referring the old Dryadic superstition of the Greeks. Writing in the nineteenth century, when words have immensely multiplied and shaded themselves to exact shade of use, he finds himself compelled, in describing phenomena, to speak phenomenally.

This is, in the nineteenth, universally unchallenged fashion of science. Men talk glibly of straight lines, atoms, ether, as if these were productive in the eye, solid to the touch, and imperishably actual. It is more know better than themselves that not one of these is demonstrable, even it is be intelligibly possible. Shall we become more exacting of language in its exact sense than in the rich development of the language itself? The word "day," for instance, still has a generation of meaning beyond its more specific reference to the time of the earth's revolution on its axis. Is it reasonable to suppose that, when "fingers were given for forks," it was less comprehensive in use?

It may be added that the objection to Scripture statements on the ground that its terms are scientifically incorrect is all the more absurd, as the objection applies chiefly to the terms selected by translators as an equivalent for the word in the original. Whatever the error of expression may be it is to be charged to translators and not to the first writers. Objects are by them designated by certain qualities as generally observed, and they can therefore correctly speak of the "firmament" as an "expanse" for instance, and of "openings," or "apertures," through which the rain finds its way to the earth. The modern idea of "minerals" and the old notion of "firmament" are both foreign to the original. They can with as much truth and poetic beauty speak of the "rising sun" as we can in our day watch the "sun-rise" and "sunset." Their mode of expression is no proof that they were ignorant of the structure of the universe. There are, on the contrary, numerous expressions to prove they were not. Biblical authorities speak of the earth as a sphere, "suspended on nothing;" they distinguish between unorganized matter and the creation of the universe and the earth; they speak of the stars as luminaries and intimate their connection in vast systems all dependent on some all-pervading power. In nearly every field science is to some extent anticipated by the writers of the Bible, a fact which would be plainer still, were it possible to give one in every respect perfect translation of the terms they use. There is no conflict between the Bible and true science. The present need of reconciliation has grown out of a misunderstanding of the Scriptures and the dicta of a philosophy that does not merit that name.

ATTACKING THE CHURCH.

The source of inspiration of the following, from a special dispatch sent from this city on Wednesday to the San Francisco Chronicle, regarding the Utah senatorship nominations, will be readily recognized here:

What side to the aggression of Brown's enemies is the fact that he is regarded politically as a Mormon, though he is not a church man. His political affiliations have always been on the Mormon side. He was one of the very few non-Mormons to vote with the Church and against the Liberal party before the division on national party lines in 1890. His practice as a lawyer has been largely connected with the attempt of the Church to resist the sequestration of its property by the government. Taking these facts into consideration, the rank and file who accepted the division movement in good faith, declare they have been duped; that the Church practically has both senators and will proceed to seize all the other offices in reach, as has been feared.

The NEWS has taken no part in the senatorial discussion, and does not intend to do so now. But the foregoing, coming from a well known quarter, shows such a manifest disposition to reinaugurate the old fight here that we deem it our duty to call attention thereto, that the people may be warned against efforts to revive conditions generally recognized as unfortunate. It may be remarked also that the insinuations of "duping" and "bad faith" are like the "stop thief" cries of one guilty of theft. The entire statement quoted from the dispatch is virtually a misstatement. This direct attack on the Church is evidently because it did not interfere to oppose Mr. Brown's nomination, and is wholly unrelated for and unjustifiable; the Church is not in politics for or against any man. As for the suggestion that it practically controls both Senators, it is not in that business; and no one should know better than the sender of that dispatch the unmistakable nature of Arthur Brown, the nominee for Senator especially referred to. So far as concerns the selection of "all the other offices within reach," an accounting today would quickly show which class has the greater number of the more important offices in the State. We believe we voice the sentiments of the reputable portion of the non-Mormon population here in saying that it is time these political assaults on the Church were stopped.

AGED CHURCH MEMBERS.

The last issue of the St. George Union contains the following from a correspondent:

In the Semi-Weekly DESERET NEWS of December 31st, 1895, I saw an article signed L. S. H., entitled "Who will compete?"

"Now, Mr. Editor, we poor Dixieites know so little of this world and its earnest strivings, that we are easy, and are generally very slow to take one, but still I will give you a few facts.

"Today I visited Samuel H. Hardy at his residence and found him and his amiable wife sitting comfortably at their hearth. I said, "Which were you born, Father Hardy?" He said, "On the 23d of September, 1804."

"When did you join the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints?"

"In May, 1842," he replied.

"When were you married to your present wife?"

They both said, "70 years ago this month."

"How old are you, Mother Hardy?"

She replied, "I was born on the 15th of September, 1806. I joined the Church in 1842."

They are well preserved and I left my blessing with them.

I then rode south a few blocks and found Thomas Jones Clark, of Harmony Branch, to come, comfortably seated, reading the DESERET NEWS without glasses, and after a friendly chat I said, "How old are you, Father Clark?"

"I will be 93 in May," he replied.

"When did you join the Church?"

"In December, 1837."

He is robust, hale and hearty.

Now what has kept these brethren in a good healthy condition has been plenty of hard work and hard living with sometimes a good home, and sometimes none at all; but always full of faith in the Gospel of Christ.

Now, Mr. News editor, don't you tender in Dixie believe, for we can compare with any of you for good, faithful men and still rather faithful women, smarter sons and daughters, healthier and better farms and more of them in the number of inhabitants, than any other place in Utah, and we will permit you to run over the borders into a few neighboring states; and you can't back us down in quality, either, for we have both quality and quantity, you never tease, cut if you want to see anything good, pay us a visit and we will show you how we live, where we live and what we live for. And to cap it all up, we say we live to do good to all mankind.

Our Dixie cotemporary mistakes the inquiry of a correspondent for information for a banter; but just the same we are pleased to hear news of our aged, faithful friends. In the item referred to, Brother George Meyers, of Spanish Fork, was named. He is in his 91st year, became a member of the Church in 1840, and signs his name without glasses. The inquiry was for an older person who has been in the Church longer. Our Dixie friend finds one who is a year older and has been in the Church a year longer; also one a year younger, who has been a member eight years longer. As to the "banter," "smarter," etc., we think the bantering is with the Dixieite; for while we concede all the good things that can be said of Utah's southern land of sunshine, its northern vales can present equally as good specimens, qualified to associate with the south as true brothers and sisters. Are there any more veterans?

PROOF FROM THE OTHER SIDE.

Some years ago, representatives of what is known as the Reorganized church asserted, and in some of their publications continue to assert, that the Prophet Joseph Smith was not responsible for the doctrine of plurality of wives, but that it was instituted by President Brigham Young after the martyrdom of the Prophet and Patriarch. This allegation of the Reorganization's representatives was readily disproved by living witnesses, some of them the plural wives of the Prophet himself. Of late the assertion has been repeated again and again, especially in the missionary field, notwithstanding the incontrovertible evidence showing the claims of the Reorganization's representatives to be incorrect. Of late a discussion has been in progress between The Return, organ of the followers of David Wolfmer, and the Saints' Herald, of the Reorganized church, in which The Return completely demolishes its opponent. We have no part in the dispute, nor have we any inclination to engage therein; but for the sake of preserving matters of history and giving information to those who may need it, we republish some of The Return's proofs, establishing that the Prophet Joseph Smith not only taught and practiced plural marriage, but that the Reorganized church representatives were fully aware of the fact afterwards sought to be denied. The evidence of the truth among the Latter-day Saints is of common knowledge and leaves no possibility of doubt; the discussion referred to brings out proof from the other side in the same line.

The Return made a statement that it could not see how the Reorganization could expect to prosper in its Utah mission so long as it made the basis of its attack the proposition that the Prophet Joseph Smith was not responsible for the revelation on plural marriage, which basis "the people of Utah know to be untrue, and know that the Josephites know it also." To this the Saints' Herald responded that "the first leaders of the Josephites assumed no position in regard to Joseph Smith's responsibility for the 'peculiar doctrine' of the Utah Church (plural marriage) that has been denied or changed. Not a man among them knew that he was responsible;" and said that "some individuals believed that Joseph Smith was in some way connected with it, and may have so admitted in speech or writing; but that the leaders, either first or last, so held, is not true."

Upon this, The Return cites several instances of denial, on the part of the Reorganized presidents and publications, of the Prophet's responsibility for the doctrine, and turn turns to the first leaders of the Reorganization, Jason Briggs, Wm. Marks and Isaac Sheen, for evidence contradicting the Herald on its second point. It quotes from the first issue of the Herald, in 1860, on page 24, where Isaac Sheen says regarding plural marriage, reprinting what he had formerly published in the Saturday Evening Post (Oct. 8th, 1853):

Joseph Smith repented of his connection with this doctrine (spiritual wifery) and said, he was deceived. He received the revelation on transgression to be true, and when he voluntarily came to Nauvoo and surrendered himself into the arms of his enemies, he said that he was ready to exchange his life. At that time he also said that if it had not been for that accursed spiritual wife doctrine he would see have come to that.

William Marks is then quoted from on page 22 of the same Herald inscribed:

He assures in tell of a conversation had with the Prophet in 1844 on the subject of polygamy, and says:

Joseph, however, became convinced before his death that he had done wrong; for, about three weeks before his death, I met him one morning in the street, and he said to me, "Br. Marks, I have something to communicate to you." We retired to a by place, and sat down together. When he said: "We are ruined people." I asked, "How so?" He said, "The revelation on polygamy, or spiritual wife system, that has been taught and practiced among us will prove our destruction and overthrow. I have been deceived in relation to its practice. It is wrong; it is a curse to mankind and we shall have to leave the United States soon unless it can be put down and the practice stopped in the Church."

Sheen and Marks, like others, here are seen in place in the mouth of the Prophet Joseph words and sentiments he never uttered; and in displaying their enmity to a doctrine he promulgated, they furnish proof from their own lips of a knowledge of the practice of plural marriage in the Church previous to the martyrdom in 1844. Commenting on its quotation, of which we have given only a portion to illustrate their character, The Return says:

We think when Mr. Marks published this, he "took a position," and we think he knew what he was publishing about, too, and we think that "Young Joseph" and the rest of the later leaders of the Josephites knew of the existence of these statements they deemed the position taken by their predecessors.

A strong lawyer like Briggs has been taken on this testimony. It has been argued that as Joseph said, "I have been deceived," and "I was wrong," "I will go into the stand and preach against it," it goes to prove that he was not responsible for its introduction.

But how about Sheen's statement that Joseph had the revelation on the subject himself? What about the sworn testimony of his other cited witnesses who brought the revelation to the council room? Joseph, as was his custom? What about the testimony of E. Robinson and Hyrum Smith, who came out against the doctrine for a long time, but finally came to said Robinson's house and said taught the doctrine to him and his wife, saying, "Joseph was right and Hyrum was wrong."

That there was such a doctrine, practice and revelation in the Church as early as 1841 is beyond the possibility of question. Did any of the men who testified as to our dissent of the revelation differing from any other than Joseph, vouchsafed to have received it? Robinson, Hyrum Smith, Sheen, Marks, Briggs, Clark, Jones, Meyers, Hardy, Hardy, Hardy