

THE MASS MEETING.

A MULTITUDE OF THE PEOPLE ASSEMBLE AND DECLARE, PROTEST AND PETITION IN RELATION TO THEIR WRONGS.

AN ENTHUSIASTIC GATHERING, AND AN EARNEST AND UNMISTAKABLE DEMONSTRATION.

A CLEAR, FORCIBLE AND COMPREHENSIVE DOCUMENT FROM THE COMMITTEE.

At 1 p.m., the hour named for the commencement of the mass meeting called to ratify the statement of grievances and protest prepared for presentation to the President of the United States, the Tabernacle was well filled.

At 1:15 the exercises opened with music by the 16th Ward brass band.

The assembly was called to order by Hon. Wm. Jennings, who nominated Hon. John T. Caine as chairman of the meeting. Seconded and carried unanimously.

O. F. Whitney nominated H. M. Wells as secretary of the meeting, and on his being sustained, he proceeded to read the call for the meeting.

Jas. Sharp nominated, as vice-chairmen, Wm. Jennings, T. G. Webber, Elias A. Smith, C. D. Brinton, Miss Mary A. Cook and Mrs. Dr. Roumania B. Pratt. Carried.

The chairman then nominated Wm. M. Stewart and Cornelia H. Clayton as assistant secretaries.

The Tabernacle choir, in attendance sang,

O, say what is Truth.

Prayer was offered by Apostle Heber J. Grant.

Music by the S. S. Union brass band. Hon. John T. Caine, Chairman, stated that the object of the meeting was to petition the Government for a redress of the grievances of the people of this Territory. He vividly portrayed, in a short speech, the persecutions through which the Latter-day Saints had passed because of their religious belief; paid a high tribute to their unflinching patriotism and devotion to God and their country, and gave a sketch of their history since the settlement of Utah.

The address was received with loud applause.

Music by the Sixteenth Ward Band.

Bishop O. F. Whitney then read the following

DECLARATION OF GRIEVANCES AND PROTEST:

To the President and People of the United States:—

FELLOW CITIZENS:—

A condition of affairs imperiling the vital interests of the vast majority of the people of Utah and their co-religionists in the neighboring States and Territories, impels us, their representatives, to address you. Our rights as American citizens are trampled upon, and believing it our imperative duty, in the presence of such a danger, to protest against the gigantic evil which threatens, not only our liberties but the liberties of every freeman, we, in general mass meeting assembled, in the name of freedom, justice and humanity make this appeal for relief and protection.

We are unpopular with our fellow countrymen; it is our religion which makes us so; we are a small minority in their midst; but we have yet to learn that these are grounds upon which to justify, in a land of liberty, the acts of oppression which we as a people, from the beginning of our history have been made to suffer.

As to our religious faith, it is based upon evidence, which to our minds is conclusive; convictions not to be destroyed by legislative enactments or judicial decisions. Force may enslave the body, but it cannot convince the mind. To yield, at the demand of the legislator or the judge, the rights of conscience, would prove us recreant to every duty we owe to God and man.

Among the principles of our religion is that of immediate revelation from God; one of the doctrines so revealed is celestial or plural marriage, for which ostensibly, we are stigmatized and hated. This is a vital part of our religion, the decisions of courts to the contrary notwithstanding. Even the Utah Commission concede this. In their report to the Secretary of the Interior, November, 1884, speaking of plural marriage, they say: "This article of their faith is as much an essential and substantial part of their creed, as their belief in baptism, repentance for the forgiveness of sins, and the like. * * * All orthodox Mormons believe polygamy to be right, and that it is an essential part of their creed."

That the Latter-day Saints should view this as a principle of their religion may require explanation. Polygamy, as understood among occidental nations, is a system of sensuality, and it is difficult for people among them to conceive how it can be associated with pure religion. But the Latter-day Saints believe that the marriage rela-

tion is one which, when properly solemnized here, exists in eternity. Every faithful woman in the Church believes that in order to insure her exaltation in the presence of God and the Lamb, she should be married or sealed to an upright, faithful man. Acting upon this belief, these alliances are formed while on the earth, upon the principle that the man is not without the woman nor the woman without the man in the Lord. They firmly believe that God has revealed this to them as a command, but while patriarchal marriage, as it is termed, is a part of their faith and practice, they have no idea that it should become universal. The equality of the sexes, if no other reason, would prevent this. It is a mistaken idea that our Church favors the propagation of this doctrine or seeks to establish it as a universal system. At the same time we fully believe that women should be married, even if two or three of them, as in the family of Abraham, Jacob and others, become the wives of one man. Instead, therefore, of our system of marriage promoting sensuality, experience has proved that it checks it; and instead of being destructive of the family relation, it is preservative of it.

Plural marriage was publicly proclaimed a doctrine of the Church in 1852. Congress declared it a crime in 1862; but the law enacted against it remained for seventeen years a dead letter, the Federal officials hesitating to enforce it, as if they doubted its constitutionality. The law of 1862 was not declared constitutional until the 6th of January, 1879. Plural marriage, therefore, was openly taught and practiced ten years before any law existed against it; and twenty-seven years had elapsed from the time of its first public promulgation, until the Supreme Court decided the law to be constitutional. Thus it is apparent that plural marriage was not introduced in violation of law, but the law was enacted against this principle of our religion.

The charges of treason and rebellion made against our people, are as absurd as they are untrue. We have given too many proofs of our loyalty for such accusations to have weight. Thrice driven from our homes, and while fleeing from the confines of the nation which refused us protection, a call was made upon us for five hundred men to assist in fighting our country's battles in Mexico. They were promptly furnished, though it took the flower of the camp—the able bodied men of that band of refugees. They left their mothers, wives and little ones, encamped in tents and wagons upon the prairies, and performed an unparalleled march of two thousand miles, over barren plains and bleak mountains, to the scene of action, where they rendered signal service in their country's cause. The main body of the exiles continued their western flight until they reached the Rocky Mountains, where they unfurled the Stars and Stripes, which had led their desert march, and two years after framed a republican constitution and applied for admission as a State into the Union. Are these evidences of disloyalty?

All through our history the general government has seemed to regard us less as loyal American citizens than as a dangerous alien element. It may have been induced at times to recognize that we had some justice on our side, but it has never come to our defense. To a delegation which narrated in burning words the story of our wrongs in Missouri, the chief magistrate of the nation made the humiliating confession that though our cause was just he could do nothing for us. The land whose Constitution, in the language of its framers, was hoped to be broad enough to shelter under its mantle the Jew, the Mohammedan, the Pagan, as well as the Christian, has scarcely been able to tolerate, much less to protect, the numerically insignificant Mormons.

The general government has ever manifested a readiness to give ear to the unsupported charges of evil-disposed persons against us, and has sought to correct alleged evils with extreme rigor. We point particularly to the inglorious crusade of 1857-58, known as the "Mormon War," based upon the falsehoods of a Federal official, when the Executive dispatched an army to whip us into a loyalty from which, on investigation, it was proved we had never departed. Our rebellion was found to be, what it always has been, the mere creation of an enemy's fancy.

The authorities at Washington have disregarded our rights in the matter of local self-government. As early as 1849 the people of Utah framed a State constitution, and applied for admission into the Union. Their application was repeated, as conditions became more favorable, first in 1856, again in 1862, then in 1872, and lastly in 1882, and each time has been ignored. A Territorial government is not a republican institution; but for thirty-five years we have been compelled to accept the colonial conditions which it imposes, and denied the most precious of all rights—that of self-government. Only for the first ten years of our existence in the mountains, were we vouchsafed this precious boon to any considerable degree, during which time a man of our choice occupied the position of governor. We possess every qualification for statehood—population, wealth, stability of commerce and society. No reasonable excuse can be assigned for the refusal of our application. We submit that it should, of right, be considered and favorably acted upon.

It has been the undeviating policy to send strangers into our midst as governors, judges, prosecuting at-

torneys and marshals, men who, with honorable exceptions, had no interest in the common welfare. We complain not only of the personal character of these officials, and that they have acted the part of petty despots among us, trampling on our liberties, assuming prerogatives they never could presume to exercise except among so unpopular a people, and haughtily ignoring our rights and feelings, but also that where this disposition has not been sufficiently pronounced, popular clamor, tending to engender and develop it, has been so strong that fair minded, just men have enjoyed but short terms of office, while those who possessed the one qualification of hatred of the Mormon people were kept secure in seats which they almost daily disgraced.

We complain of repeated manifestations of ill-feeling from the parent government. Even in small country towns Mormon postmasters have been displaced for strangers—in some instances mere transients, who in many cases have been retained in office although serious charges, supported by evidence sworn to by reputable citizens, have been preferred against them. Mormons have been frequently removed without just cause. The names of post-offices in towns named for leading and beloved citizens—men who laid the foundation of the Territory's prosperity—have been changed at the whim or suggestion of some small-souled bigot or insignificant minority of petitioners, the Federal government in all these movements using its power prejudicially to the great majority of the people.

Our numerous petitions, protests and memorials in our own defense have been usually passed over unnoticed, while petitions urging governmental action against us, from religious denominations, unacquainted with us except from hearsay, have been accorded consideration and generally acted upon. Sixty-five thousand names appended to a document asking for an investigation of the Utah situation before the Edmunds act should be passed—the signatures of the people directly interested, were cast aside as of no moment, and the odious law was pushed to its consummation.

The Commissioners appointed under the Edmunds law have grossly abused the authority conferred upon them, and have usurped extraordinary, illegal and arbitrary powers. While their sole duty under the law was to appoint registration and election officers and to canvass the returns and issue certificates of election to members of the Legislative Assembly, they have illegally assumed to exercise important legislative and judicial functions.

They officiously formulated an unauthorized and illegal expurgatory test oath, covering the whole life of the individual, and required each elector in the Territory to take it before he could register or vote; and by their order, the names of all persons who failed to take this oath were stricken from the registry list. They so constructed the test oath that it could not be taken by any person who had ever lived in polygamy, or who cohabited with more than one woman "in the marriage relation," but it could be, and was taken by persons who cohabited with more than one woman not in the marriage relation—thus disfranchising only Mormons and permitting non-Mormon violators of the law to register and vote.

They have arbitrarily assumed to exercise legislative powers by the promulgation of rules and orders which, in effect, materially changed the existing laws and excluded from the polls thousands of legal voters, who have since been restored to the privileges of electors by the decision of the Supreme Court of the United States.

They have presumed to exercise the highest order of judicial authority, by declaring void the acts of the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Utah which provide for the election of Territorial officers, and they have arbitrarily, and without authority of law, forbidden and prevented the canvass and return of any votes cast for these officers since the passage of the Edmunds law; thus completely nullifying and abrogating statutes of the Territory which have received the implied sanction of Congress, and have never been pronounced invalid by the courts, but which have been in force and acted upon as valid laws for many years.

They have constituted themselves a Supreme Tribunal for the determination of all matters in the Territory pertaining to elections and the qualifications of voters, and their opinions and orders upon these subjects have been regarded by their appointees as the supreme law of the land.

They have grossly abused their authority in the appointment of registration officers by selecting for such positions, whenever possible, only such persons as belong to the anti-Mormon faction, denying to the majority party, whose members comprise four-fifths of the population of the Territory, representation among the registrars. And in the appointment of judges of election they have either refused the majority party any representative at all or have only given it one of the three judges in each precinct.

They have assumed to be charged, as the representatives of the Federal Government here, with the duty of suppressing polygamy, and have presumed to advise the President and Congress as to the kind of legislation they deemed necessary for that purpose, recommending the most radical and extreme measures, thereby showing themselves the pronounced enemies of the Mormon people.

We complain of the injustice done us by the United States officials sent to execute the laws: they have generally allied themselves with sectarian priests and political adventurers, lending their executive or judicial influence to foment local excitement, and degrade us in the estimation of people abroad.

The Governors of Utah, possessing absolute veto power, have usually been despotic in their ministerial acts.

Governor Shaffer in 1870 forbade the militia to muster, drill or assemble for any purpose. So far was this order carried into effect that the aid of Federal troops was invoked to prevent the marching of a company of militia in Salt Lake City in a public celebration of the anniversary of American Independence.

The present Governor especially, has acted the part of a petty tyrant.

In his official messages and reports, in his contributions to the press, and in his public addresses, he has persistently misrepresented the state of affairs in Utah, and seized upon every opportunity to arouse popular prejudice and hatred against her people.

He sought to defeat the expressed will of the people by declaring a man receiving 1,357 votes elected over one for whom 18,568 votes were cast.

He endeavored without authority of law to displace the officers of the Territory elected by the people, and fill their places with men of his own appointing.

He has accused us of a lack of interest in educational matters, but when a bill was passed by our Legislature appropriating money to build a University, he refused to sign it; the building, however, was erected with means advanced by private citizens and stands a monument to his shame.

The Edmunds act contemplates the discontinuance of the Utah Commission so soon as the Territorial Legislature should provide for filling the registration and election offices under the local laws; but when a bill was submitted to him providing for this, in full conformity to the Edmunds law and other acts of Congress, he vetoed the bill and thus continued the Commissioners in office, contrary to the intention of Congress, to the annoyance of the people of Utah, and at great expense to the nation.

The last Legislature passed a bill appropriating the representation of the Territory. This bill was drawn up in accordance with the Governor's suggestions, but when it was presented to him for his signature, he treated it with contemptuous silence, thus insulting the legislators and the people who elected them.

These and many other similar acts brand him a despot, unworthy to govern among his fellowmen.

The Edmunds law which not only provides for the punishment of polygamy, but also cohabitation with more than one woman, whether in the marriage relation or outside of it, is made to operate upon one class of people only—the Mormons;—and yet of the non-Mormon class who transgress the law the name is legion.

The paramour of mistresses and harlots, secure from prosecution, walks the streets in open day. No United States official puts a "spotter" on his trail, or makes an effort to drag his deeds of shame and guilt before a judge and jury for investigation and punishment. But note the contrast:—

In Utah, Idaho and Arizona a concerted assault is made upon the "Mormon" people.

"Spotters" and spies dog their footsteps. Delators thrust themselves into bedchambers and watch at windows. Children are questioned upon the streets as to the marital relations of their parents. Families are dragged before Commissioners and grand juries, and on pain of punishment for contempt, are compelled to testify against their fathers and husbands. Modest women are made to answer shamefully indecent questions as to the sexual relations of men and women. Attempts are made to bribe men to work up cases against their neighbors. Notoriously disreputable characters are employed to spy into men's family relations.

Contrary to good law, persons accused of crime are esteemed guilty until they prove themselves innocent. The burden of proof rests upon the accused instead of upon the accuser. Trial by jury in the Territories is no longer a safeguard against injustice to a Mormon accused of crime. Accusation is equivalent to conviction. Juries are packed to convict, and if they fail to find a verdict against the accused when he is a Mormon, insult and abuse are heaped upon them by the anti-Mormon press. Men, fearful of not obtaining justice in the courts, are avoiding arrests, believing no fair and impartial trial can be had under existing circumstances.

There are persons in the community who contracted plural marriages before there was any law against the practice, and who have not since entered into such relations. After the passage of the Edmunds Act, and out of deference to its requirements, they ceased to cohabit with their plural wives. Such men have violated no law and yet they are harassed and prosecuted.

In consequence of this crusade, which bears all the aspects of a religious persecution, business relations are disturbed; values of every kind unsettled; neighborhoods acritated and alarmed; and property of the people generally jeopardized. It not only affects alleged violators of the law, but those who are innocent of transgressing it. It works a hardship upon the entire community, upon the innocent as well as the guilty.

The overwhelming majority of the Mormon people are monogamists, and but a small percentage are even suspected of violating the law. In the name of this great majority, we pray that this unusual, cruel and partial administration of the law shall cease.

If the "conscience of the people" demand that the law be enforced, let it be enforced in all the Territories and in the District of Columbia as well as in Utah—upon Jew and Gentile as well as upon the Mormon.

These are some of our grievances. Now hear our protest.

We protest against unfair treatment on the part of the general government.

We protest against a continuance of Territorial bondage, subversive of the rights of freemen and contrary to the spirit of American institutions.

We protest against special legislation, the result of popular prejudice and religious interference.

We protest against the conscience of one class of citizens being made the criterion by which to judge another.

We protest against the tyranny of Federal officials, and the continuance in office of men who disgrace their positions and use their official powers as a means of oppression.

We protest against the partial administration of the Edmunds law—the punishing of one class for practicing their religion, and exempting from prosecution the votaries of lust and crime.

We protest against the breaking up of family relations formed previous to the passage of the Edmunds law, and the depriving of women and children of the support and protection of their husbands and fathers.

We protest against the prosecution of persons, many of whom are infirm and aged, who entered into plural marriage before it was declared a crime and have never violated any law.

We respectfully ask for the appointment by the President of a commission to fairly and thoroughly investigate the Utah situation; and pending its report we solemnly protest against the continuance of this merciless crusade.

The reading was greeted throughout with frequent bursts of applause. Those parts reciting the usurpation of judicial powers by the Utah Commission, and the methods pursued by the courts to secure convictions under the Edmunds law, brought forth cries of "Shame, shame!" and the arraignment of the present Governor of Utah for his many acts of tyranny and despotism was received with cheers.

Hon. Jas. Sharp moved the adoption of the declaration and protest.

Seconded.

Bishop John Q. Cannon said he was greatly in favor of the adoption of this protest against wrongs which freemen could not submit to. There might be some, but they are few, who thought it unwise to boldly set forth the rights of the people. He was not in favor of any concessions. Trusted the people would be united and firm in maintaining their rights, for themselves, their children, and the nation itself. The Latter-day Saints would resist every form of oppression to the last. The founders of our government had opposed every act of tyranny by the mother country, and this people gloried in the patriots' courage. This protest was not made with cringing or shrinking, but with an unflinching determination to maintain the right. We desire no rights that we do not wish others to enjoy. The causes which impel us to the step are weighty. We have endured more than any other people would be willing to. The only parallel in American history was at the commencement of the Revolutionary War. The times are perilous, and we propose to protest against striking down the safeguards of liberty. We could not sacrifice principle, shoot the rapids in the dangerous stream, and leave the whirlpool to our posterity. [Applause.]

Music by the S. S. U. Band. Junius F. Wells, Esq., felt deeply the necessity of action on the part of this community in opposing the present assault made upon their homes. There were among them descendants of the Pilgrims who were to-day being persecuted for the maintenance of the principles contended for by their fathers. The speaker was the offspring of plural marriage, and he had not yet learned that his rights were less than those of any of the sons of God. He knew his father was a man of honor and his mother a woman of virtue. It was thought by some that our homes should be constructed on the American and not on the "Mormon" plan. The early settlers of America rejoiced in many sons and daughters; but a change had come over the people. It was so in the history of his progenitors, but his father had the courage to become a reformer, and the family name was preserved from being blotted out. In New England, to-day, too frequently the homes consisted of an invalid father and mother and two or three weakly children. But how different in Utah! And the children here were not in any particular inferior to those of monogamists. The Mormon fathers would provide for their offspring without the law requiring them to do so. God had led this people out from the midst of their enemies, and given them this land, and has said that in order to live long therein, we must honor our fathers and mothers. Our homes are worth more to us than life. It had been said that the decision of the courts was the end of the matter. The law had named as a crime what he knew was not a crime, and never would be, and he expected to see that law repealed, for justice would claim