

PREFACE.

AMERICA is the paradise of heterodoxy. All sorts of wild, strange and even abominable religions flourish unchecked, side by side, and generally without violent collision. The wild dreams of the fervid Oriental imagination; the vague shadowings of Gothic mysticism; the coarse materialism of French infidelity, and the ideal fancies of Greek and Asiatic, all the errors and worn out theories of the Old World, of schisms in the early Church, the monkish age and the rationalistic period, find here a free air, a fertile soil, a more congenial clime and a second native country, as it were, in which new and more luxuriant growths spring rapidly from the old and half dead stocks of pseudo-theology.

But the inventive American mind is not content merely with old errors, and the Yankee is nothing if not practical; hence we see that to every new or purely American phase of religious error, there is always tacked a feature of political power, communism of property, social license or moral perversion, a general revolt against accepted theories in law, medicine, marriage, government or social relations. Let the extreme tend which way it will, it is equally an extreme; whether of the anti-marriage Shakers, the celibate Harmonists, the wife-communists of Oneida, or the polygamous Mormons. All this is, perhaps, a necessary evil—an inevitable adjunct to a great good. In the perfect liberty of conscience guaranteed, the perverted or diseased conscience is equally free with the pure or healthy; and where every man is free to choose as he will, it is reasonable to suppose that many will choose but poorly. Like all good principles this liberty of conscience is strangely liable to abuse; but a careful examination will show, I think, that the present condition is far better, with all its evil outgrowths, than would be any aiming at repression. Repression is not unity. Suppose either of the prominent sects to be made the Established Church—if indeed the mind can possibly conceive of an Established Church in America—the Methodist, for instance; then would that church at once lose many of its communicants; most people would avoid it to the farthest extent allowed by law, not from any particular hostility to that one church, but simply because it *was* established.

We may, indeed, congratulate ourselves, that with such perfect liberty of choice so few have adopted beliefs at all dangerous either to the State or to society; for these last are the only questions with which we have a right to deal. But certain forms of belief cannot possibly confine themselves to speculative errors; the perversion of moral and ethical principles is too radical to be confined to the heart, and the hideous moral gangrene, starting from the soul and center, works outwardly through the life in all manner of corruption, confusion and abomination. When the faith is perfectly inwrought, it cannot but show itself in acts, and with these the State has a right to deal. Perfect toleration is due to all beliefs, and these gross forms of error only demand attention when endeavoring, against the good of the State, to make a peculiar moral condition the general law for a whole people, and still more as laboring to radically pervert the Christian idea of marriage. If the experience of all civilized nations for three thousand years, and the best judgment of the best minds in law founded upon that experience, have proved any one fact more than another, it is that the marriage relation should be strictly regulated by law, that the State has an absolute right to prescribe the civil conditions accompanying and the civil rights resulting from it; and that the human passions, whether excited by mere lust or by religious fanaticism, must be controlled by positive law. It matters not if an individual esteems it his natural right to act contrary to express law, or if several individuals constituting a community believe it to be a religious right; they are equally subject thereto, and must take the legal consequence of disobedience. It is then a gratifying fact, that so few have adopted beliefs tending to pervert the marriage relation. Of the forty millions in America less than half a million are included in all of such sects. In this light liberty of conscience in America is almost a perfect success.

The vast majority of our people have founded their religious belief on theories not inimical to the public good; and the scores of varying sects which arise from year to year, generally do so only to run a brief and meteor-like race, and sink like dissolved exhalations in the bogs and mire of ignorance from which they arose. But occasionally we see one of these parasitic growths upon the body of religious freedom, which, from peculiar and special

causes, extends its existence beyond what we would naturally look for; and a few, originally transplanted from Europe where the parent organization has long since expired, maintain a sort of sickly life through two or three generations in America. Of such are the Shakers from England, and the Harmonists from Germany. But where in contact with vital Christianity, they must sooner or later yield; their wild enthusia[s]m is sufficient for rise and growth, but lacks the virtuous energy to direct and continue. To such, comparatively innocent and harmless, the public direct little attention. But there are a few, which manage to preserve a sort of isolation even in the midst of other sects, or in extreme cases, to get apart and aside, and maintain for a long period an independent existence. Of these none have attained to such prominence as the sect called Mormons. Having leaders at once sagacious and unscrupulous, they have long managed to avoid whatever contact would weaken their organization. We have seen them, from small and obscure beginnings, rise to a strength sufficient to create a local rebellion in Missouri; transplanted thence to Illinois, rise to a threatening power; transplanted again, flourish rapidly for a while, and though now evidently on the decline, yet strong enough to create a difficult and delicate political problem, and like the Bohon Upas, overshadow a whole Territory with a deadly influence. Scattered through the nation Mormonism would be the weakest of all religions; collected into one Territory, and ruling there with almost absolute power, they present a painfully interesting problem. Comparatively, their numbers are trifling; locally, they are of great importance. In the light of the principles here enunciated, and with perfect confidence in their correctness, this work has been prepared; with a view to the better enlightenment of the American public on this question and if possible, to make the duty of Government and people more plain, to set forth the most salient points in the progress of religious imposture, and to draw attention to a Territory rich in natural resources. It is believed that the work contains most of the material facts of interest in regard to Utah and the Mormons; whether of the climate and resources of the former, or the history, theology and peculiar social practices of the latter. The history of the sect is drawn from many sources: from their own works, from personal records of

several who have spent many years among them, from evidence published by the State of Missouri, from official documents of States or the General Government, from previous compilations and other accredited sources. Of charges against the Mormons, not fully proved, the statements for and against them have been equally presented. The same rules of evidence have been applied in summing up their history, as are held applicable in courts of justice. The author's opportunities for personal observation will be seen in the course of the work. The author is well aware of the many imperfections of the work, but does not seek to disarm criticism by a prefaced apology; it is given as a compilation of testimony, on which the reader has the same privilege of passing judgment as the author has exercised on those before him. Whatever may be thought of the style in which they are presented, I trust many of the facts will be found interesting, and if the work should excite an intelligent interest among the American people, in regard to the affairs of Utah, it will have accomplished the dearest wish of the author.

J. H. B.

CORINNE, UTAH TERRITORY, *April 5th*, 1870.

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