

VOICE OF THE PRESS.

The Dark and Daring Spot on Mormon History.

The testimony thus far elicited by the prosecution in the trial of John D. Lee for participation in the Mountain Meadows Massacre, tends to confirm the general belief in regard to the direct responsibility of the heads of the Mormon Church for that hideous crime. The evidence of Philip Klingensmith, who was himself a participant in the butchery, proves that the murderers acted under express orders, and that the extermination of the emigrants had been resolved upon from the moment they entered the Territory of Utah. It does not as yet appear possible that Klingensmith's testimony will be sufficient to convict Brigham Young of complicity, but the moral certainty is not the less strong against him. It is shown that the Mormons were under a rigid discipline, which combined the influences of superstition, terrorism and organization. As soldiers of the Nauvoo Legion they had learned to obey the word of command. As Mormons they were taught to receive the orders of the Prophet as divine inspirations, and as members of the Mormon community they had been made to understand that it was as much as a man's life was worth to refuse obedience to the authorities. Says Klingensmith in his cross-examination: "I did not try to prevent any man from going to the massacre; had no power to do so; had I undertaken that it would have been bad for me. I was afraid both of the church and the military authorities. If a man then did not walk up to orders it would not be well for him. I feared personal violence. I feared I would be killed." Yet this man was commander of the Nauvoo Legion for Southern Utah, and First Counselor to Brigham Young. But though he does not appear to be able to trace the order for the massacre beyond the boundaries of his own district, the surrounding circumstances are such that there should be no difficulty in following up the evidence. In the first place the emigrants were ordered out of Salt Lake City, which was Brigham Young's special territory. Immediately upon that President Haight is found preaching against them to destruction, and denouncing them to destruction. It is thoroughly well known that no subordinate authorities were ever allowed to take the initiative in matters affecting the entire church. Klingensmith's own position is very significant in this connection. He was a military commander, a Counselor, and a Bishop, but he says: "I had power only in small temporal cases." Thus it is clear that the very rigidity of the discipline, the compactness of the organization, tends to enforce the responsibility of the central authority. When Napoleon's Grand Army was marching upon Moscow, the discipline was so lax that each regiment resolved itself into a horde of plunderers; the authority of the officers was ignored; and even the Marshals often found it impossible to get their orders obeyed. In such a case it is clear that the responsibility for any special outrage could not have been brought home to a Division Commander or General of a Brigade. In the Peninsular War Wellington had his troops so entirely under his control at the last that pillaging was abolished, or if committed and detected punished by instant execution. In this case it is clear that a special outrage could have been quickly and easily traced, and the responsibility made apparent; and the Mormon case resembles the second of these two instances. In a community so completely governed by a combined military and religious discipline as was that of Utah, it would be most irrational to suppose that a deed of itself so repugnant to humanity, and obviously fraught with such grave consequences to the whole church, would have been undertaken without express direction, by subordinate authorities. This would be an irrational hypothesis, but surely not less so than the theory that so foul a deed could have been subsequently condoned by Brigham Young, supposing him to have had a hand in it. Had it been perpetrated in defiance of his authority there is no conceivable motive for his forgiveness of it. Certainly every consideration of policy, of self regard, of desire for the world's good opinion, must in such a case have impelled him to repudiate the infamous crime, and to relieve the church, even at the sacrifice of the actual murderers, from the overlasting shame of such an atrocity. But there is nothing to show even this. He expressed regret for the occurrence of the massacre. On the contrary, the advice he is credited with is far more like that of an accomplice than anything else. He is reported to have told the murderers that they had better distribute the property of the victims, and say nothing more about the matter, not even between themselves. There was no sorrow, no reproof. It was simply "bury the dead out of sight, and destroy the evidences of the crime as quickly as possible."

But it is scarcely worth while to elaborate arguments showing the responsibility of the head of the Mormon Church, when the Mormon people are even at this moment doing their utmost to show that they are in full sympathy with the spirit that dictated the Mountain Meadows Massacre. Our dispatches this morning relate how the Mormons of Beaver have been serenading John D. Lee in his prison, and how their young men, only restrained by the wholesome presence of United States troops, have been parading the streets, flourishing weapons, and threatening to take the witness Klingensmith out and lynch him. This serenade to John D. Lee, what is it but a popular indorsement of the massacre at which he presided? We protest that this demonstration, eighteen years after the deed itself, is only less horrible than the infamy it commemorates; for it witnesses to the survival of all the brutalism and all the abject subjection to vulgar superstitions, which made the butchery possible in the first instance. When the news of the massacre of St. Bartholomew was brought to Rome, Pope Gregory the Thirteenth ordered a *Te Deum* to be sung, and rejoicings to be held. The barbarity of such a course has seemed horrible to the world, and it would indeed have been an unprecedented piece of brutality had Gregory known what it was that he thus applauded. But it is now well understood that the reports of the massacre conveyed to Rome proceeded from the French Court, and that they represented it as merely the suppression of a deep conspiracy against the King's life. The Mormons of Beaver possess no such palliation for their conduct, however. They have been deceived as to the nature and extent of the crime for which John D. Lee is on trial. They knew when they serenaded him that he was the principal agent in the massacre, and that not only he but themselves, had been held accountable for the crime by an outraged world. And when, knowing these things, they thus publicly honor the prisoner, it is a perfectly just inference from the act that they also indorse and testified their approval of the crime for which he is being tried.

Whether it is possible to carry out the ordinary process of law in a community which thus sympathizes with murderers and woman-butchers is extremely doubtful. The situation in Utah is in nearly all respects identical with the situation at the South during the prevalence of the Ku-Klux outrages, and it is to be feared that in this case, as in that, more rigorous methods will have to be adopted for securing the vindication of the law. Meantime we would caution the fiery sympathizers with the massacre who are making these demonstrations, and indulging these threats, against allowing their instincts to carry them too far. It is true that Beaver is comparatively isolated, but since the railroad was built no spot in Utah is out of reach, and there are a great many people on this side of the mountains who would rather welcome an opportunity to avenge the slaughter of the emigrants in kind.—*Sacramento Union*.

As a matter of course, there will be no conviction. We can hardly see the use of arresting and bringing to trial the perpetrators of the massacre if Mormon's are to be allowed to sit on the jury. They might as well try a stage robber by a jury composed of highwaymen."—*Rees Lacer Herald*.