

LATTER DAY SAINTS' Messenger and Advocate— EXTRA.

Kirtland, Geauga County, Ohio, }
July 25, 1836. }

To John Thornton, Esq., Peter Rogers, Esq., Andrew Robertson, Esq., James T. Y. Thompson, Esq., Col. William T. Wood, Doct. Woodson J. Moss, James M. Hughs, Esq., David R. Aitchison, Esq. and A. W. Doniphan, Esq.

GENTLEMEN,—

We have just perused, with feelings of deep interest, an article in the "Far West," printed at Liberty, Clay County, Mo. containing the proceedings of a public meeting of the citizens of said county, upon the subject of an excitement now prevailing among you occasioned, either from false reports against the church of Latter Day Saints, or from the fact, that said church is dangerous to the welfare of your country, and will, if suffered among you, cause the ties of peace and friendship, so desirable among all men, to be burst asunder, and bring war and desolation upon your now pleasant homes.

Under existing circumstances, while rumor is afloat with her accustomed cunning, and while public opinion is fast setting, like a flood-tide against the members of said church, we cannot but admire the candor with which your preamble and resolutions were clothed, as presented to the meeting of the citizens of Clay county, on the 29th of June last. Though, as you expressed in your report to said meeting—"We do not contend that we have the least right, under the constitution and laws of the country, to expel them by force,"—yet communities may be, at times, unexpectedly thrown into a situation, when wisdom, prudence, and that first item in nature's law, SELF-DEFENCE, would dictate that the responsible and influential part should step forward and guide the public mind in a course to save difficulty, preserve rights, and spare the innocent blood from staining that soil so dearly purchased with the fortunes and lives of our fathers. And as you have come forward as "mediators," to prevent the effusion of blood, and save disasters consequent upon civil war, we take this opportunity to present to you, though strangers, and through you, if you wish, to the people of Clay county, our heart-felt gratitude for every kindness rendered our friends in affliction, when driven from their peaceful homes, and to yourselves, also, for the prudent course in the proposed state of your community.

But, in doing this, justice to ourselves, as communicants of that church to which our friends belong, and duty towards them as acquaintances and former fellow citizens, require us to say something to exonerate them from the foul charges brought against them, to deprive them of their constitutional privileges, and drive them from the face of society:

They have been charged, in consequence of the whims and vain notions of some few uninformed, with claiming that upper country, and that ere long they were to possess it, at all hazards, and in defiance of all consequences.—This is unjust and far from a foundation, in truth. A thing not expected, not looked for, not desired by this society, as a people, and where the idea could have originated is unknown to us.—We do not, neither did we ever insinuate a thing of this kind, or hear it from the leading men of the society, now in your country. There is nothing in all our religious faith to warrant it, but on the contrary, the most strict injunctions to live in obedience to the laws, and follow peace with all men. And we doubt not, but a recurrence to the Jackson county difficulties, with our friends, will fully satisfy you, that at least, heretofore, such has been the course followed by them. That instead of fighting for their own rights, they have sacrificed them for a season, to wait the redress guaranteed in the law, and so anxiously looked for at a time distant from this. We have been, &c. are still, clearly under the conviction, that had our friends been disposed, they might have maintained their possessions in Jackson county. They might have resorted to the same barbarous means with their neighbors, throwing down dwellings, threatening lives, driving innocent women and children from their homes, and thereby have annoyed their enemies equally, at least.—But, this to their credit, and which must ever remain upon the pages of time, to their honor, they did not. They had possessions, they had homes, they had sacred rights, and more still, they had helpless harmless innocence, with an approving conscience that they had violated no law of their country or their God, to urge them forward.—But, to show to all that they were willing to forego those for the peace of their country, they tamely submitted, and have since been wanderers among strangers, (though hospitable) without homes. We think these sufficient reasons, to show to your patriotic minds, that our friends, instead of having a wish to expel a community by force of arms, would suffer their rights to be taken from them before shedding blood.

Another charge brought against our friends is that of being dangerous in societies "where slavery is tolerated and practiced." Without occupying

time here, we refer you to the April (1836) No. of the "Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate," printed at this place, a copy of which we forward to each of you. From the length of time which has transpired since its publication, you can easily see, that it was put forth for no other reason than to correct the public mind generally, without a reference or expectation of an excitement of the nature of the one now in your country. Why we refer you to this publication, particularly, is because many of our friends who are now at the west, were in this place when this paper made its appearance, and from personal observation gave it their decided approbation, and expressed those sentiments to be their own, in the fullest particular.

Another charge of great magnitude is brought against our friends in the west—of "keeping up a constant communication with the Indian tribes on our frontier, with declaring, even from the pulpit, that the Indians are a part of God's chosen people, and are destined, by heaven, to inherit this land, in common with themselves." We know of nothing, under the present aspect of our Indian relations, calculated to rouse the fears of the people of the Upper Missouri, more than a combination or influence of this nature; and we cannot look upon it other than one of the most subtle purposes of those whose feelings are embittered against our friends, to turn the eye of suspicion upon them from every man who is acquainted with the barbarous cruelty of rude savages. Since a rumor was afloat that the Western Indians were showing signs of war, we have received frequent private letters from our friends, who have not only expressed fears for their own safety, in case the Indians should break out, but a decided determination to be among the first to repel any invasion, and defend the frontier from all hostilities. We mention the last fact, because it was wholly uncalculated for on our part, and came previous to any excitement on the part of the people of Clay county, against our friends, and must definitely show, that this charge is also untrue.

Another charge against our friends, and one that is urged as a reason why they must immediately leave the county of Clay, is, that they are making or are like to, the same "their permanent home, the center and general rendezvous of their people." We have never understood such to be the purpose, wish or design of this society; but on the contrary, have ever supposed, that those who resided in Clay county, only designed it as a temporary residence, until the law and authority of our country should put them in the quiet possession of their homes in Jackson county. And such as had not possessions there, could purchase to the entire satisfaction and interest of the people of Jackson county.

Having partially mentioned the leading objections urged against our friends, we would here add, that it has not been done with a view on our part, to dissuade you from acting in strict conformity with your preamble and resolutions, offered to the people of Clay county, on the 20th ult. but from a sense of duty to a people embarrassed, persecuted and afflicted. For you are aware, gentlemen, that in times of excitement, virtues are transformed into vices, acts, which in other cases, and under other circumstances, would be considered upright and honorable, interpreted contrary from their real intent, and made objectional and criminal; and from whom could we look for forbearance and compassion with confidence and assurance, more than from those whose bosoms are warred with those pure principles of patriotism with which you have been guided in the present instance, to secure the peace of your country, and save a persecuted people from further violence, and destruction?

It is said that our friends are poor; that they have but little or nothing to bind their feelings or wishes to Clay county, and that in consequence, have a less claim upon that county. We do not deny the fact, that our friends are poor; but their persecutions have helped to render them so. While other men were peacefully following their avocations, and extending their interest, they have been deprived of the right of citizenship, prevented from enjoying their own, charged with violating the sacred principles of our constitution and laws; made to feel the keenest aspersions of the tongue of slander, waded through all but death, and are now suffering under calamities calculated to excite the indignation and hatred of every people among whom they may dwell, thereby exposing them to destruction and inevitable ruin!

If a people, a community, or a society, can accumulate wealth, increase in worldly fortune, improve in science and arts, rise to eminence in the eyes of the public, surmount these difficulties, so much as to bid defiance to poverty and wretchedness, it must be a new creation, a race of beings super-human. But in all their poverty and want, we have yet to learn, for the first time, that our friends are not industrious, and temperate, and wherein they have not always been the last to retaliate or resent an injury, and the first to overlook and forgive. We do

not urge that there are not exceptions to be found: all communities, all societies and associations, are cumbered with disorderly and less virtuous members—members who violate in a greater or less degree the principles of the same. But this can be no just criterion by which to judge a whole society. And further still, where a people are laboring under constant fear of being dispossessed, very little inducement is held out to excite them to be industrious.

We think, gentlemen, that we have pursued this subject far enough, and we here express to you, as we have in a letter accompanying this, to our friends, our decided disapprobation to the idea of shedding blood, if any other course can be followed to avoid it; in which case, and which alone, we have urged upon our friends to desist, only in extreme cases of self-defence; and in this case not to give the offence or provoke their fellow men to acts of violence,—which we have no doubt they will observe, as they ever have. For you may rest assured, gentlemen, that we would be the last to advise our friends to shed the blood of men, or commit one act to endanger the public peace.

We have no doubt but our friends will leave your county, sooner or later,—they have not only signified the same to us, but we have advised them so to do, as fast as they can without incurring too much loss. It may be said that they have but little to lose if they lose the whole. But if they have but little, that little is their all, and the imperious demands of the helpless, urge them to make a prudent disposal of the same. And we are highly pleased with a proposition in your preamble, suffering them to remain peaceably till a disposition can be made of their land, &c. which if suffered, our fears are at once hushed, and we have every reason to believe, that during the remaining part of the residence of our friends in your county, the same feelings of friendship and kindness will continue to exist, that have heretofore, and that when they leave you, you will have no reflection of sorrow to cast, that they have been sojourners among you.

To what distance or place they will remove, we are unable to say: in this they must be dictated with judgment and prudence. They may explore the Territory of Wisconsin—they may remove there, or they may stop on the other side—of this we are unable to say; but be where they will, we have this gratifying reflection, that they have never been the first, in an unjust manner, to violate the laws, injure their fellow men, or disturb the tranquility and peace under which any part of our country has heretofore reposed. And we cannot but believe, that ere long the public mind must undergo a change, when it will appear to the satisfaction of all that this people have been ill-treated and abused without cause, and when, as justice would demand, those who have been the instigators of their sufferings will be regarded as their true characters demand.

Though our religious principles are before the world, ready for the investigation of all men, yet we are aware that the sole foundation of all the persecution against our friends, has arisen in consequence of the calumnies and misconstructions, without foundation in truth, or righteousness, in common with all other religious societies, at their first commencement; and should Providence order that we rise not as others before us, to respectability and esteem, but be trodden down by the ruthless hand of extermination, posterity will do us the justice, when our persecutors are equally low in the dust, with ourselves, to hand down to succeeding generations, the virtuous acts and forbearance of a people, who sacrificed their reputation for their religion, and their earthly fortunes and happiness, to preserve peace, and save this land from being further drenched in blood.

We have no doubt but your very reasonable meditation, in the time of so great an excitement, will accomplish your most sanguine desire, in preventing further disorder; and we hope, gentlemen, that while you reflect upon the fact, that the citizens of Clay county are urgent for our friends to leave you, that you will also bear in mind, that by their complying with your request to leave, is surrendering some of the dearest rights and first, among those inherent principles, guaranteed in the constitution of our country; and that human nature can be driven to a certain extent, when it will yield no farther. Therefore, while our friends suffer so much, and forego so many sacred rights, we sincerely hope, and we have every reason to expect it, that a suitable forbearance may be shown by the people of Clay, which if done, the cloud that has been obscuring your horizon, will disperse, and you be left to enjoy peace, harmony and prosperity.

With sentiments of esteem and profound respect, we are, gentlemen, your obedient servants.

SIDNEY RIGDON,
JOSEPH SMITH, Jr.
O. COWDERY,
F. G. WILLIAMS,
HYRUM SMITH.