

P R E F A C E .

This treatise on the faith and condition of the Mormons, results from a careful observation of that strange and interesting people, during more than a year's residence among them, in an official capacity. It was conceived, that what is influencing the conscientious character of a half million souls, is worthy a serious investigation, though not pertinent to official report under government auspices.

No apology for error is here set forth, though the persecution of its advocates is deprecated.

The writer has undertaken neither the task of criticism nor controversy. His aim is not "to shoot folly as it flies," but to let folly tire on its own pinions, and reason regain its sway over erratic feeling, when the mists of prejudice on one side, and of fanaticism on the other, are dispelled by the light of knowledge.

For those who desire *facts* in the history of humanity, on which to indulge in reflection, is this offered. It were far easier to give a romantic sketch in lofty metaphors, of the genesis and exodus of the empire-founding Saints—the subject is its own epic of heroism, whose embellishment is left to imaginative genius, and its philosophy to be deduced by the candid philanthropist.

Truth and justice, in few words, and as near as possible to fallible human observation, is what this exposition aims at. Facts of motive and history are collected, which concern a portion of our own fellow-citizens. These are the scholars of the workshop and the field—the learners are students of men and things. They have been schooled in patience, perseverance and self-denial—men of action tried in varied circumstances.