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*A good book is like a good name - better than riches.*

# IMPROVEMENT ERA

ORGAN OF  
YOUNG MEN'S MUTUAL IMPROVEMENT  
ASSOCIATIONS.

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VOLUME FOUR.

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"What you young people want, is a magazine that will make a book to be bound and kept, with something in it worth keeping."—*President John Taylor.*

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# MISSIONARY EXPERIENCE RECALLED BY THE DEATH OF QUEEN VICTORIA.

BY ELDER SAMUEL W. RICHARDS, FORMERLY PRESIDENT OF THE  
EUROPEAN MISSION OF THE CHURCH.

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Under the administration of Victoria, late queen of England, both nations and individuals may recount many eventful scenes and conditions of the past connected with her life, which call forth the admiration and respect they now delight to cherish of her in memory. Such is the case with the writer of this article. In 1847, in the presence of her majesty for the first time, in Scotland, and standing then very close to her, I endeavored to study her character, as delineated in facial formation and expression, with all of which I was favorably impressed, and which have since in the main proved true.

In 1852-3-4, as president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the British Isles, and having, indeed, the watch-care of all the Saints in all the countries outside of this land of America, I obtained a passenger agency for shipping emigrants from ports in the British Isles to America, and for three years conducted a very heavy emigration. During the latter part of this time, a very unusual number of emigrants were dying at sea—so much so as to present a very alarming condition that called for a speedy remedy, if one could be found.

A committee was organized under her majesty's direction, consisting of sixteen members of her parliament, with John O'Connell, Esq., the then noted leader of the Catholic-Irish nation, as

chairman. This committee was instructed to find a remedy, if possible, by learning the cause of this fearful mortality prevailing at sea. During this inquiry, it was reported to her majesty that the "Mormon" emigration going from Liverpool was not subject to the fearful conditions complained of from other sources generally.

As the result of such information, while in my office one morning early in May, 1854, I received a very notable document, sealed with wax, in which was the impress of her majesty's official seal. For a moment this created quite a curiosity among those present, which was only increased when I opened and read it, and found it to be an order, not a mere invitation, for Mr. Richards, the shipping agent of the "Mormon" emigration, to appear in London before a committee of her parliament, to answer such questions as might be required by them.

The fact that I had been summoned to appear in London by her majesty created quite a little excitement among the Saints, as to the result of my visit there. On entering the committee room, I was informed that my examination would not take place until the following day. At the hour named, I was present and invited to a seat inside of a large, half-circular table around the outside of which this committee was seated, facing inwardly, so that all could look me in the face while I could look directly at each of them. Close by my side sat a reporter to take every word of my answers to the questions propounded.

All being satisfactorily arranged, the chairman, John O'Connell, Esq., arose and stated the object of the interview, after which the usual questions were asked by him, as to my name, residence, business location, occupation, etc. He stated the fact that I had been called there from having been represented as conducting the best shipping agency of emigrants in the kingdom. He wished me to explain how it was done, and wherein it differed from other agencies conducted under the law.

This gave me the opportunity of explaining our organization throughout the British Isles, and adjacent countries from which our emigrants came. This I did very minutely. By this system, I could call the emigrants into Liverpool mostly in one day, issue to them their tickets the following day, and let them go immediately on board where they were made comfortable till sailing, on the day

or two following, instead of lying for weeks in the docks without shelter and sometimes without food, as many did under the ordinary way of treating emigrants. Under the latter mode of treatment, they were exposed to cold and all manner of diseases, and were ready to go on ship board to die, as very many did from such exposure. I learned that it had been quite a common occurrence of late for captains of vessels to report as high as from twenty to thirty per cent of emigrants dying at sea, and in one instance as high as forty-three per cent. I further stated that I always sent a person of experience on board ship to accompany and take charge of them on shipboard, and to look after their interests there, as carefully as this was done in our organizations throughout the country on land.

At this statement, I was interrupted by the chairman and asked if I took control of emigrants on shipboard, out of the hands of the captain of the vessel, to which I made reply that the captains of vessels were very glad to have me do so much for them; and further, that was the main reason why they preferred to carry "Mormon" emigrants to any others.

I told them that I presided over seventy thousand of her majesty's subjects who esteemed the counsel of the leaders of The Church as the way of life for them to walk in. We published a paper having a circulation of twenty-five thousand copies through which I was in weekly correspondence with those over whom I was presiding, as well as some thousands of others who were its readers.

After concluding this general statement of organization, etc., the chairman arose from his seat and said, "Mr. Richards, it is not in the power of any civil government to create and maintain such an organization as you have. We cannot attempt any such policy, but if you can tell us anything that we can do to better the condition of our emigrants who go to sea, we want you to do it. I then stated several items which we had acted upon over and above the provisions of the law, and which were deemed essential to the welfare and good of passengers both at sea and going on board in port, before sailing, all of which were afterward made law by parliament; and so many of them as were necessary to bring the

American laws into harmony with the English, were enacted by the United States government, and carried into effect.

The freedom with which I communicated our views to the committee on all questions relating to the matters under investigation, encouraged them to ask many questions quite irrelevant to the main subject. The nobility of the members of the committee was fully maintained, as whenever a question was asked irrelevant to the subject under consideration, it was mostly accompanied with the remark, "You are not required to answer unless agreeable to you."

After spending some four or five hours in this free manner of conversation, there was a general sympathy created which seemed wonderful to contemplate; and at the close of the interview, each one of the members came and most cordially shook hands with me; and many of them asked me whenever I came to London to come and make their house my home.

The chairman, Mr. O'Connell, called me to his seat. The clerk of the committee was ordered to pay me double fees for time spent away from my office. Upon a most cordial expression of satisfaction at our interview, he insisted upon my meeting him the next morning at the door of the Commons, as he wished to introduce me to some of his friends there. After a very warm greeting, and introduction to quite a number of the members, he assured me that if the house had known of the interest attached to my examination, every member would have been there to hear it. I was taken to the House of Lords for a like introduction.

To sum it all up, no man on earth could have asked for higher considerations than were bestowed so freely upon the European president of the "Mormon" people, while representing the purpose of the King of Kings in the gathering of his people from the nations of the earth, and in answering the summons of the queen of England.

Most of the leading papers in London published reports of this interview, as being of unusual interest. It was also reported in country papers. The following, as a sample, I take from the *Cambridge Independent Press*.

On Tuesday, says the London correspondent, I heard a rather remarkable examination before a committee of the House of Commons. The witness



was no other than the supreme authority in England of the "Mormonites," and the subject upon which he was giving information was the mode in which the emigration to Utah—Great Salt Lake—is conducted. This curious personage is named Richards; he is an American by birth; is a dark, rather good-looking man; I should judge of fair education, and certainly of more than average intelligence. He gave himself no airs, but was so respectful in his demeanor, and ready in his answers, that, at the close of his examination, he received the thanks of the committee in rather a marked manner. \* \* \* Questions from Mr. F. Peel elicited many interesting facts relative to the sect; but I will only stop to notice generally, that, according to Mr. Richards, the great hope of the "Mormons" is to form a nation by the Great Salt Lake. At any rate, there is one thing which, in the opinion of the emigration committee of the House of Commons, they can do; viz: teach Christian shipowners how to send poor people decently, cheaply and heathfully across the Atlantic.

In closing, I will say that before the report of this committee was sent to the House of Commons for their action, it was forwarded to me, at my office in Liverpool, for examination, that every word might be as I would wish to have it reported, which I considered a very unusual compliment, in view of so many questions having been asked entirely irrelevant to the matter under consideration, by the committee.

Among all of my experiences in missionary life, as varied, perhaps, as those of any other man living at the present time, I place this as among the most interesting and satisfactory of them all.

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### PURE THOUGHTS.

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The lily's lips are pure and white,  
Without a touch of fire;  
The rose's heart is warm and red,  
And sweetened with desire;  
In earth's broad field of deathless bloom,  
The gladdest lives are those  
Whose thoughts are as the lily,  
And whose hearts are like the rose.—NIXON WATERMAN.