

AFFAIRS IN UTAH.

The President's Instructions to the District Attorney of the Territory.

The following letter from the United States Attorney General to the District Attorney for Utah we find in the Washington Constitution:

ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE,

May 17, 1859.

Sir.—Your letters of March 24 and April 6, addressed to me have been received. The grave importance of the facts contained in them, and in other communications from Utah by the same mail, required that the whole correspondence of the several departments with the officers of the Territory should be laid before the President. He has carefully considered the subject, and his opinion will be found expressed in a letter from me to the two Associate Justices of the Territory—a copy of which I send you.

You are clothed with the authority of a public accuser for the Territory. It is your duty to commence and carry on all public prosecutions with such aid and assistance as you see proper to call in. On proper occasions, and in a proper, respectful manner you must oppose every effort which any judge may make to usurp your functions. Do not allow your rights to remain unasserted. If the judges will confine themselves to the simple and plain duty imposed upon them by law, of hearing and deciding cases that are brought before them, I am sure that the business of the Territory will get along very well. This must be impressed upon their minds, if possible, for, if they will insist upon doing the duties of Prosecuting Attorney, and Marshal, as well as their own, everything will be thrown into confusion, and the peace of the Territory may be destroyed at any moment.

But your duty must be performed with energy and impartiality. Every crime that is committed, no matter by whom, should be exposed and punished. I need not say that you are to make no distinction between Gentile and Mormon, or between Indian and white man. You will prosecute the rich and the poor, the influential and the humble with equal vigor, and thus entitle yourself to the confidence of all.

It is only by these general remarks that I can express the wishes of the President with reference to your office; for at this distance it is impossible to give you detailed instructions. But there is one subject to which I would call your special attention. It appears that a company of emigrants from Arkansas to California was attacked at the Mountain Meadows, three hundred miles south of Salt Lake, and one hundred and nineteen cruelly murdered, none being spared except a few children, all of whom were under seven years of age. This crime, by whomsoever committed, was one of the most atrocious that has ever blackened the character of the human race. The Mormons blame it upon the Indians, and the accusation receives some color from the fact that all the children who survived the massacre were found in the possession of Indians. Others, and among them a judge of the Territory, declare their unhesitating belief that the Mormons themselves committed this foul murder. All the circumstances seem, from the correspondence, to be enveloped in mystery. In your letter the manner of the murder is described—showing that the emigrants were attacked within a corral which they had formed for defence, that they agreed to surrender their arms upon the promise that their lives should be spared, and after doing so were all of them treacherously butchered. Why does the information stop there? If that much be known how is it that we know no more? Who were the parties that received this surrender, and how is it proved? Cannot the Superintendent of Indian Affairs, or some one connected with that department of the public service trace back the children from the Indians in whose possession they were found to the corral where their parents were slain. It is said that some of the Mormon inhabitants of Utah have property of the emigrants in their possession. If this be true, will it not furnish a thread which, properly followed, would lead back to the scene of the crime?

These are mere suggestions, which are intended to show the interest of the government on the subject, rather than to instruct you in the performance of your duty. It is, however, confidently expected of you that you will intermit no watch, nor let any opportunity escape you of learning all that can be known upon this subject. If you shall be under the necessity of employing agents, such reasonable expenses as you may be put to on that account will be paid.

Your conduct at Provo seems, from all accounts of it, to have been perfectly proper, and is fully approved by the President.—Your refusal on a former occasion to violate the promise of pardon contained in the President's proclamation was equally praiseworthy and correct.

I am, very respectfully,

Yours &c.,

Alex. Wilson, Esq., J. S. BLACK,
U. S. District Attorney,
Utah Territory.