

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.

BY ANDREW JENSON, ASSISTANT CHURCH HISTORIAN.

Joseph Smith was born December 23, 1805, in Sharon, Windsor county, Vermont, the fourth child of Joseph Smith and Lucy Mack.

When about seven years old he came near losing his life through a fever sore, but by opening the leg and extracting several pieces of affected bone, amputation was avoided. In this excruciating operation he exhibited that courage which, united with tender feeling, always marks the character of the great and good. When ten years of age he removed with his parents to Palmyra, New York, where he lived eleven years, the latter part of the time in Manchester township. At the age of fourteen, when passing one evening through the dooryard of his father's dwelling, he was shot at; but the ball missed him, and lodged in the head and neck of a cow. No trace of the person who attempted the murder was ever found, and no reason could be assigned for the attempt.

Joseph's father was a farmer; and owing to the adversities of his parents, and the difficulty in giving children an education in newly-settled districts, Joseph's advantages for learning were few indeed, but his mind was active in observing and reflecting. The aspect of the religious societies around him, however, did not commend any of them to his judgment sufficiently to induce him to become a member, though he early thought much on religion. He was somewhat partial to the Methodists, and sometimes attended their meetings.

In the mist of this indecision, he had recourse to his Bible, and there read in St. James, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him

ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." He felt the force of the passage; it gave him heavenly confidence, and he resolved to test the promise.

Accordingly, on the morning of a beautiful, clear day, early in the spring of 1820, he retired to the shade of a wood near by, and after kneeling began to offer up the desires of his heart to God. While thus engaged, two personages stood before him, clothed with ineffable brightness, and one, pointing to the other, said, "This is my beloved Son, hear him."

Joseph then made known the object of his prayer, and he was informed that he must join none of the sects, for they were all wrong, and their creeds an abomination in the sight of God.

After receiving this vision, he informed one of the Methodist preachers of it, but met only with ridicule and opposition. He experienced the same in all quarters, and was led to ask, "Why persecute me for telling the truth?" Again, "I had seen a vision, and who was I that I could withstand God?"

Thus things went on until the evening of September 21, 1823, when he received a visitation from the angel Moroni, who informed him that God had a work for him to do, and revealed to him who were the aborigines of America, and where was deposited their sacred record, the Book of Mormon. The angel informed him that this record contained the fulness of the everlasting gospel, and that he should be the instrument in bringing it forth, and have power given him to translate it. The vision was twice repeated during the same night.

The next day the angel stood by his side and gave him further instructions. After he had communicated to his father what he had seen, he repaired to the place where the plates which contained the record were deposited, and was permitted to view them.

In 1825, he was employed by Mr. Josiah Stool, together with others, to dig for a silver mine, which it was reported the Spaniards had opened in Harmony, Susquehannah county, Pa., and from this circumstance arose the opprobrious epithet of a "money digger." While thus engaged, Joseph boarded with a Mr. Isaac Hale, whose daughter, Emma, he married January 18, 1827.

After waiting four years from the time he first conversed

with the angel Moroni, Joseph obtained the plates of the Book of Mormon—September 22, 1827.

As soon as the plates were entrusted to him, he met with the utmost difficulty in preserving them from his excited persecutors, and was finally under the necessity of leaving Manchester, and going with his wife to Susquehannah County, Pa., which place he reached in December, and immediately commenced copying some of the characters from the plates.

In April, 1828, he commenced to translate, and secured Mr. Martin Harris to write for him. Subsequently and chiefly, Oliver Cowdery was his scribe.

Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were ordained to the Aaronic priesthood by John the Baptist, May 15, 1829. According to his instructions, they baptized and also reordained each other. Soon afterwards they received the Melchizedek priesthood through the administration of three of the ancient apostles—Peter, James and John.

At length, after having passed through many vicissitudes, the translation of the record was completed, and early in 1830 an edition, under the title of the Book of Mormon, was published.

The next great event in Joseph Smith's life was the organization of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, April 6, 1830, in the house of Mr. Peter Whitmer, at Fayette, Seneca county, New York.

The mission which he had been called to perform soon began to make great progress and excite corresponding hatred in the hearts of its opposers.

In January, 1831, he removed to Kirtland, Ohio, where a branch of the Church, numbering about one hundred members, had previously been raised up. There, among other things, he was engaged in revising the Holy Scriptures.

Accompanied by his wife, Sidney Rigdon and others, Joseph left Kirtland for Missouri, June 19, 1831, in compliance with a commandment of the Lord. After his arrival in Missouri, it was revealed to him that Independence, Jackson county, Mo., was the place for the New Jerusalem to be built, and that the spot for the Temple was a lot lying a little west of the court house. On the 3rd of August the Temple site was dedicated.

After spending several days in receiving revelations for the Church, and giving instructions for its guidance, he returned to Kirtland, where he arrived on the 27th.

For some time after his return from Missouri, his time was occupied in traveling and preaching in various places, by which numbers of converts were made. He also continued the revision of the scriptures.

In March, 1832, while living in Hiram, a mob gathered about his house, and having dragged him from it in the dead hour of the night, tarred and feathered him and left him half dead on the bare ground.

Soon after this event, on April 2, 1832, he left his temporary home in Hiram, on another visit to Missouri. Arriving in Clay county on the 24th, he met with a welcome "only known to brethren and sisters united as one in the same faith and by the same baptism, and supported by the same Lord."

In May, 1832, he started on his return trip to Kirtland, but on the way, the horses of the stage in which he and the other brethren were traveling took fright. Bishop Newel K. Whitney jumped out, and in doing so, caught his foot in the wheel, by which his foot and leg were broken in several places. Joseph jumped out, but cleared himself. This accident detained Joseph with Bishop Whitney at Greenville four weeks, and while there Joseph nearly lost his life by poison, mixed with his dinner, intentionally or otherwise, but it is supposed intentionally. They arrived in Kirtland some time in June.

During the following year, Joseph was very active in Kirtland, and according to revelation commenced the building of a temple, the corner stones of which were laid July 23, 1833.

He also organized the first High Council of the Church at Kirtland, February 17, 1834.

A few days later (February 24) he received a revelation concerning the troubles which the Saints in Missouri were experiencing, by which he was commanded to select the young men of the eastern branches of the Church to go up to their relief. Accordingly, on the 26th, he started from home to obtain volunteers for this purpose, and on the 5th of May he set out with about one hundred men, with clothing and other necessaries for the Saints who

were suffering in Missouri. After a long and difficult journey, as leader of the historic Zion's Camp, he arrived in Missouri.

During his brief sojourn in Missouri, on this occasion, Joseph organized a High Council in Clay county, and otherwise arranged the affairs of the Church in Missouri. The High Council, by his direction, addressed an appeal, on behalf of the Church, to the authorities of the state and of the Nation, and to all people, for peace, and praying for protection while they sought to obtain, without force, their rights, privileges and immunities. In July, Joseph again returned to Kirtland.

Assisted by the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon, Joseph called and ordained Twelve Apostles, February 14, 1835, and soon after commenced the organization of the Seventies.

Later in that year, he obtained some rolls of papyrus covered with hieroglyphic figures and devices. One of these rolls was found to contain the writings of Abraham, which were translated by Joseph, and subsequently published.

The Lord's House in Kirtland, afterwards known as the Kirtland Temple, was dedicated by Joseph, March 27, 1836. With Oliver Cowdery, he was favored to behold a vision of the Lord Jesus Christ; one of Moses, who committed unto them the keys of a dispensation for gathering Israel from all parts of the earth; one of Elias, who committed unto them the gospel of Abraham; and another of Elijah, who committed unto them the keys of a dispensation to turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers. Many other persons saw glorious visions on the same occasion.

In June, 1837, assisted by his counselors in the First Presidency, Joseph set apart Heber C. Kimball and Orson Hyde, two of the Twelve, as missionaries to England. This was the first foreign mission appointed by the Church.

In the following September, Joseph left Kirtland for Missouri, in company with Sidney Rigdon, to fulfill a mission appointed them by a conference of elders. The object of this mission was to lay off new stakes of Zion for the rapidly increasing members of the Church to gather to. On his return in the following December, he found "apostasy, persecution and confusion" prevailing to an alarming extent.

Joseph states that the year 1838 dawned upon the Church in Kirtland in all the bitterness of apostate mobocracy, which continued to rage, so that it was necessary for Elder Rigdon and himself to flee from its deadly influence, as did the apostles and prophets of old. They started from Kirtland about 10 o'clock in the evening of January 12, 1838, on horseback, and reached Norton, Medina county, Ohio, sixty miles distant, by the next morning. Here they tarried until the arrival of their families, and on the 16th continued their journey in wagons to Far West, Mo.

Joseph had only resided in Far West about six months before the troubles the Saints had been wading through for several years reached their culminating point, and he, together with others, was betrayed into the hands of the mob-militia, on Wednesday, October 1. The next day, his brother Hyrum was arrested and brought into camp. A court-martial was then held, and they were condemned to be shot on Friday morning on the public square in Far West, as an example to the "Mormons," but owing to the dissension of Gen. Doniphan, the sentence was not put into execution. They and five other brethren, were carried off to Independence under a strong guard, from whom they suffered many indignities by the way. From thence they were taken to Richmond, where they arrived November 9.

Gen. Clark, the head of the mob militia who had the brethren in custody, determined to shoot them three days after their arrival, but by the influence of Gen. Alexander W. Doniphan, he was intimidated, and after searching through the military code of laws and finding that preachers of the gospel who had never done military duty, could not be subject to court martial, he delivered them over to the civil authority, to be tried as persons guilty of "treason, murder, arson, larceny and theft." They underwent a mock trial, and were then sent to Liberty, in Clay county, where they were put into jail and confined about five months. Poison was given to them several times, and even human flesh, during this imprisonment.

In July, 1839, the prisoners were removed to Daviess county, to have a trial, it was said, but it was a mere farce—the grand jury who sat upon their case during the day, acted at night as their guard, and boasted of the bloody deeds they had committed

at Haun's mill and other places of sad memory. They were, however, indicted for "treason, murder, arson, larceny, theft, and stealing," on which they asked for a change of venue to Marion county, but it was refused, and one given for Boone, in removing to which place the sheriff who had them in charge told them that he had been requested by Judge Birch, of Daviess county, never to carry them to Boone county, and give them permission to escape, which they availed themselves of, and Joseph and Hyrum arrived in Quincy, Ills., a few days afterwards. There they were welcomed by the embraces of their families, and received the congratulations of the Saints and sympathizing friends.

Accompanied by his family, Joseph left Quincy, May 9, 1839, for Commerce, and on the 10th took up their residence in a small log house on the bank of the Missouri river.

About this time the Saints were making out statements of their losses and sufferings in Missouri, to present to the President of the United States, with a petition to Congress for redress, and on the 29th of October Joseph left Nauvoo for Washington, with Sidney Rigdon and Elias Higbee, the three having been appointed a committee to present the petition. After arriving in Washington, they had an interview with President Martin Van Buren, and subsequently with John C. Calhoun. It was at this interview that Mr. Van Buren uttered the well known words—"Gentlemen, your cause is just, but I can do nothing for you."

Early in February, 1840, seeing that all his efforts were ineffectual to obtain the redress of the wrongs the Saints had endured, Joseph left the capital for Nauvoo. The remaining four years of his life may he said to have been chiefly occupied in the building up of that city as a gathering place for the Saints.

After remaining silent for nearly two years, Missouri made a demand on Governor Carlin, of Illinois, for Joseph Smith and others. A writ for their apprehension was issued, but the sheriff could not find them. The writ was returned to the sheriff, and the matter dropped at that time.

Among the numerous revelations which Joseph received from the Lord for the guidance of the Church at large, one received Jan. 19, 1841, deserves special mention. In that he was commanded to immediately make a proclamation of the gospel to all

the kings of the world, to the president and governors-elect of the United States, and to all the nations of the earth. In that revelation, also, were pointed out the duties of various members of the Priesthood. It required a boarding house to be built for the accommodation of strangers who should go up to Nauvoo to contemplate the work of the Lord, called upon the Saints to come from afar with their wealth and means, to help to build a temple to the Lord, in which, among other ordinances of salvation, might be administered baptism for the dead, etc.

In June, 1841, in returning from Quincy to Nauvoo, Joseph was arrested on the writ before referred to, for the purpose of being delivered up to Missouri. A writ of *habeas corpus* was obtained, and the case was heard at Monmouth, Warren Co., before Judge Stephen A. Douglas, of the United States Supreme Court, which resulted in his immediate discharge. The Hon. O. W. Browning in addressing the court for the defense, eloquently referred to the cruelties of Missouri. He concluded with the following language—"And shall this unfortunate man, whom their fury has seen proper to select for sacrifice, be driven into such a savage land, and none dare to enlist in the cause of justice. If there was no other voice under heaven ever to be heard in this cause, gladly would I stand alone, and proudly spend my last breath in defense of an oppressed American citizen."

In the summer of 1842, Joseph Smith succeeded John C. Bennett in the mayoralty of Nauvoo, which office he retained until his death.

Lilburn W. Boggs, ex-governor of Missouri, was shot at and wounded, at his residence in Independence, Mo., May 6, 1842. Still as relentless as ever in his purpose to destroy Joseph, he charged him with being accessory before the fact, and applied to Thos. Reynolds, governor of Missouri, to make a demand upon the governor of Illinois for him. Accordingly, a writ was served upon him, Aug. 8, 1842. An investigation into the matter was had on a writ of *habeas corpus*, in January, 1843, at Springfield, before the Hon. Nathaniel Pope, judge of the circuit court of the U. S. for the district of Illinois, which ended in an honorable acquittal, the judge requesting, "that the decision of the court be entered

upon the records in such a way, that Mr. Smith be no more troubled about the matter."

Missouri, however, still true to her purpose, continued to excite the public mind against Joseph, and made another demand upon Illinois to deliver him up to her for trial on charge of treason; and in June, while he was visiting at Inlet Grove, twelve miles from Dixon, Ill., Joseph H. Reynolds, sheriff of Jackson county, Mo., and Harman F. Wilson, of Carthage, Ill., appeared with a writ from the governor of Illinois, and arrested him. They drove him to Dixon in a wagon, and frequently struck him with their pistols on the way, and would have immediately carried him into Missouri to be murdered, but for the interference of the people. With much difficulty, a writ of *habeas corpus* was procured at Dixon, and made returnable before the nearest tribunal, in the 5th Judicial District, authorized to hear and determine upon such writs, which was at Nauvoo. On returning there a writ was sued out and made returnable before the municipal court, and, upon examination, Joseph was discharged from arrest upon the merits of the case, and upon the further ground of substantial defects in the writ issued by the governor of Illinois.

Missouri was not yet satisfied, but made a requisition upon governor Ford, of Illinois, to call out the militia to retake Joseph. To this the governor objected, as the laws of the State had been fully exercised in this matter, and everything had been done which the law warranted. The affair cost Joseph upwards of \$3,500. At Dixon he sued out a writ against Reynolds and Wilson, for false imprisonment, and using unnecessary violence in arresting him. The case was called up for trial May 9, 1844, and a verdict for the plaintiff was recorded, with \$40 damages and the cost of the suit.

The great revelation on marriage given to Joseph was first written July 12, 1843, but it was not published to the world until 1852.

The growing importance of Nauvoo, the increase of members of the Church in all parts of the Union, and in Great Britain, together with the perplexity caused by false friends and apostates in Nauvoo, made Joseph's duties truly multifarious; but in the midst of it all, his love for the Saints was constant and his regard for heir interest ever wakeful.

The U. S. presidential chair at this time was about to be vacated. Among the new candidates were John C. Calhoun and Henry Clay, and to ascertain what would be their rule of action to the Saints as a people, Joseph wrote to each, setting forth how they had been persecuted by Missouri, and had failed to obtain redress, though they had petitioned from the State courts to Congress itself. Very exceptional replies were returned, and Joseph rejoined at some length, severely commenting upon them. The number of votes which the Saints could give was not unknown to the rival parties—Whig and Democrat, and they were courted by both; but the Saints, who could not feel justified in giving them to either, put Joseph Smith forward as a candidate.

In February, 1844, Joseph issued an address to the American people, declaring his views on all the great leading political topics of the times. This, and the correspondence between him and Calhoun and Clay, were published in the *Times and Seasons*. Though Joseph was not elected, this course prevented political demagogues from making a target of the Saints, as had been the case at previous elections, and also would have enabled them to vote for one whom they considered "honorable, fearless and energetic," and "that would administer justice with an impartial hand, and magnify and dignify the office of chief magistrate."

Francis M. Higbee, a member of the Church, had been accused by Joseph Smith, some time in 1842, of seducing several women, and of other evil conduct, and was brought before Presidents Brigham Young and Hyrum Smith, and others, which much enraged him. Similar charges were preferred against the notorious John C. Bennett. They both confessed and asked forgiveness. But their repentance was not sincere, and they secretly determined to ruin Joseph. The thing festered in Higbee's mind until May, 1844, when he sued out a writ, from the circuit court of Hancock county for the arrest of Joseph, on the plea of defamation of character. The damages were laid at \$5,000.

Joseph was accordingly arrested, but petitioned the municipal court of Nauvoo for a writ of *habeas corpus*, that the whole matter might be thoroughly investigated. An examination took place before that court, and resulted in his discharge; first, from the illegality of the writ, upon which he was arrested, and, secondly,

from its being fully proved that the suit was instituted through malice, private pique, and corruption, and ought not to be countenanced.

This led, in quick succession, to the establishment in Nauvoo, of a newspaper called the *Nauvoo Expositor*, which had for its object the defamation of the citizens who were not of their party. The foulest libels upon Joseph Smith's private character, and that of other persons, appeared in its columns, and its prospectus actually proposed the repeal of the city charter. The city council falling back upon their prerogatives, contained in the charter, and in the legislative powers of the city council, declared the *Expositor*, on account of its filthy contents, a nuisance, and ordered its abatement, which was carried out by the city marshal and the police.

Its proprietors then went to Carthage, the county seat, and sued out a writ against the mayor, marshal, and police for a riot! The constable from Carthage executing the writ was requested by Joseph and his companions to return them anywhere else but Carthage, as that place had become the rendezvous of the most hostile opponents of the Saints, and fatal consequences were apprehended if he and the other defendants were taken thither. The constable, however, refused, upon which the municipal court sued out a writ of *habeas corpus*, which the charter empowered them to do, and an investigation was had before the court. It resulted in the dismissal of the prisoners, as no riot had been committed, they having only acted in the discharge of a duty imposed upon them by the city council.

The mobbers refused to recognize the writ of *habeas corpus*, and the decision of the municipal court, and sent runners through Hancock and surrounding counties to ignite the already inflammable materials which everywhere abounded in the shape of virulent opposers of the truth, and haters of Joseph Smith and Nauvoo. By this means a mob was raised to again arrest Joseph, or lay the city in ashes, and literally exterminate its inhabitants. Volunteers were actually invited from Missouri to join in the unlawful proceeding.

In this emergency, the Nauvoo Legion, numbering between 3,000 and 4,000 men, was placed under arms to defend the city

against the mob until the governor should do something in his official capacity. These prompt measures induced the mob to remain in Carthage and Warsaw, and this was the position of the parties when the governor appeared in that town.

Instead of the mob being dispersed, and the ringleaders arrested, it was actually mustered into regular service, the governor placing himself at its head. His first act was to disband the Legion, whose men were standing in defense of their own lives, those of their wives, children, and of the citizens generally. He then requested the mayor, marshal and policemen who had been before arrested and discharged, as related, to repair to Carthage and appear before a magistrate to answer the charges preferred against them in the writ; thus, in his capacity as governor and the representative of justice, trampling upon the rights of a chartered city, *habeas corpus* and all.

The prisoners were taken to Carthage, June 24, 1844, the public arms were demanded from the Legion, and the city was left defenseless within a half a day's journey of an infuriated mob.

On leaving Nauvoo for Carthage, Joseph expressed himself thus, "I am going like a lamb to the slaughter; but I am calm as a summer's morning. I have a conscience void of offense towards God, and towards all men. I shall die innocent, and it shall yet be said of me, 'He was murdered in cold blood.'"

The prisoners arrived at Carthage late at night, and on the morning of the 25th, were apprehended on a charge of treason, founded on the affidavits of Henry O. Norton and Augustine Spencer.

In the afternoon the prisoners appeared before Robert F. Smith, J. P., to answer to the charge of riot, but by the advice of counsel, and to prevent further excitement, they voluntarily entered into recognizances in the sum of \$500 each for their appearance at the next term of the circuit court for the county.

Joseph and Hyrum had not been at liberty above half an hour, before they were waited upon by constable Bettsworth, who had arrested them in the morning on the charge of treason. He insisted upon their going to jail with him, but their counsel, Messrs. Woods and Reid, objected to it, as they were entitled to an exam-

ination before they could be sent to jail. The constable holding a *mittimus* from Justice Smith, they were conveyed to jail, "there to remain until discharged in due course of law."

The next day Justice Smith commanded the constable to bring the prisoners before him for examination. The jailor refused to give them up. The justice then sent a body of "Carthage Greys," of which he was captain, and they, by intimidation and threats, procured Joseph and Hyrum, and brought them before him. The counsel for the prisoners expressed a wish for subpoenas for witnesses from Nauvoo, which were granted, and the examination was postponed until 12 o'clock on the 27th.

On the first day of their imprisonment Joseph and Hyrum were visited by Governor Ford, who, after a lengthy conversation upon the leading causes which had given rise to the difficulties, promised them protection, and pledged his word and the faith and honor of the State, that they should be protected. He had made this pledge on a previous occasion. The governor also stated that he intended to march into Nauvoo at the head of the force which had assembled, to gratify them, and that the prisoners would accompany him, and afterwards return to attend the trial before the magistrate, which had been postponed to the 29th. This intention was not, however, fully carried into effect. The troops were disbanded, except two companies—one from McDonnough county and the other the Carthage Greys. At the head of the first the governor marched to Nauvoo, on the 27th of June, but without the prisoners; they were left in prison with the Carthage Greys to protect—the same men who had just previously mutinied, and came near shedding their blood in the governor's presence.

After his arrival at Nauvoo, the governor called the citizens together, and addressed them for about twenty minutes in a most insulting manner, and while the outraged citizens of Nauvoo were listening to this harangue, the Prophet and his brother were being murdered in jail.

Between the hours of 5 and 6 in the afternoon of this memorable day (June 27, 1844) a mob, numbering nearly one hundred and fifty men, disguised by masks and painted faces, rushed upon the jail, overpowered the guard, and shot Joseph and Hyrum dead. Elder John Taylor was wounded with four bullets, and a fifth struck

his watch which saved his life. The fingers pointed to 5 h., 16 m., 26 sec., leaving on record the exact time when the tragedy occurred.

Joseph Smith's whole life was one of extraordinary activity. In about twenty years he brought forward and translated the Book of Mormon; received numerous revelations, from which the Book of Doctrine and Covenants is mainly compiled; caused his mission to be proclaimed in the four quarters of the globe, and saw, according to many authorities, more than 50,000 persons receive it; founded and built up a city, to which people gathered, and built one temple at Kirtland, and partially another at Nauvoo. From first to last he was involved in about fifty lawsuits, arising out of the persecutions of his enemies, but came out of the legal furnace "without the smell of fire, or a thread of his garment scorched." For a period, in 1842, he edited the *Times and Seasons*, and at his death was mayor of Nauvoo; lieutenant-general of the Nauvoo Legion (a portion of the State militia), one of the regents of the Nauvoo University, and a member of the Nauvoo Agricultural and Manufacturing association. He had four sons, Joseph, Frederick G. W., Alexander, and Don Carlos, and a fifth, David H., was born about five months after his assassination. He was tenderly attached to his family, and in private life was always cheerful and agreeable. In public capacity he was courteous and affable. He was not suspicious, and believed that all men were honest, which drew around him several hypocrites and designing, wicked men, who caused him much sorrow, and were the source of his chief persecutions. He was truly inspired of God, and commensurate with his holy calling, so that "without learning, without means, and without experience, he met a learned world, a rich century, a hard-hearted, wicked and adulterous generation, with truth that could not be disproved."

Salt Lake City, Utah.