

## JOSEPH SMITH AS A MAN.

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In viewing the lives and labors of men, we are prone to regard them wholly or chiefly from the standpoint of their special calling, rather than the characters of the men themselves. We are inclined to allow the official capacity in which a man labors to hide the man himself from us, as in a mist. By his work and calling he is usually placed on an eminence, where he is but dimly seen and therefore but poorly appreciated, in his capacity as a man. As Moses' face was hidden by a veil, so do we allow the personality of our friends, especially those who attain to prominence, to be hidden from us by the official position in which they stand. And this is unfortunate; for the lovable and admirable traits of men, the moods and impulses of "the human heart which faints and trembles," are among the most precious heritages God has given to the world. To love a man is much better than merely to respect the position he holds; and we cannot love him unless we know him. It has often occurred to me that the unfaltering love and stanch devotion of the women who followed Christ, may be largely attributed to the fact that they, more than the men who knew him, understood and appreciated his personal glory and goodness, and did not think and dispute so much as the men, of his claims to Messiahship. And it is one of the strongest incentives to right living, for us to become closely familiar with the righteous lives of others. If to know certain men is a liberal education, then to love and emulate them is a much more valuable discipline, and we cannot emulate unless we know.

Joseph Smith, like all other men of strong character, plainly manifested his personality in the work he did. It would be as

well not to look for the imprint of the die on the newly issued coin, as not to expect to see the imprint of the prophet's personality on the work he was called to do. He was strongly human, and therefore his life and character as a man appeal most forcibly to our human sympathies. And he stood remarkably well the test to which, in the end, we must all be subjected—those who knew him best loved him most. This test he stood, it may truthfully be said, as well as any man whose history we have, an exception being made in the case of the one Divine Person who has lived a mortal life on the earth, the Lord Jesus Christ. To my unworthy pen has been submitted the task of treating this phase of the life of our great prophet, his personality as a man.

A brief description of his personal appearance would perhaps not be out of place. He is described as a symmetrically built man, fully six feet in height, and weighing about two hundred pounds. His eyes were blue, and very clear. Of his features, his friend and close associate, Parley P. Pratt has written:

His countenance was ever mild, affable, beaming with intelligence and benevolence; mingled with a look of interest and an unconscious smile or cheerfulness, and entirely free from all restraint or affectation of gravity; and there was something connected with the serene and steady penetrating glance of his eye, as if he would penetrate the deepest abyss of the human heart, gaze into eternity, penetrate the heavens, and comprehend all worlds.

His complexion was remarkably clear, due to the uniform tint of his skin, and the absence of a beard. His hair was light brown, and of a glossy smoothness, waving, and of fine texture. Those who met him, both friends and strangers, unite in referring to him as a handsome man; and one person has said that the portraits of him extant fall so far short of doing him justice, that they should be called mere caricatures. His physical strength and activity were in keeping with his size; and through a temperate and abstemious life he retained and fostered his bodily powers.

In keeping with his great physical strength, were the feats of skill and endurance which he performed. He excelled in running, wrestling, jumping, and manly games. He indulged in these pastimes when occasion offered, and was always ready for a good-natured frolic. And I think it may be safely said that no one of his acquaintance cared to challenge him more than once to a con-

test in any of these directions. Yet, with all his physical strength and agility, he manifested in his actions the tenderness and gentleness which, going with such strength, softens it and sanctifies it to the good of mankind. He exemplified the words of Shakespear, "O, it is excellent to have a giant's strength; but it is tyrannous to use it like a giant." No one has ever accused the Prophet Joseph Smith, no matter what his provocation may have been at times, of using his physical superiority to gain undue advantage over others.

With such strength he would be expected to possess strong human nature. With it would naturally go a fondness for physical exercise, for athletic sports, and for the good things of life. He was no pale ascetic, mortifying the body, and wasting it away by long fasts and secret vigils. Such was not his work, and such was not his nature. He was destined to mingle with men, to partake of their joys and sorrows, not to keep himself aloof from them and from the stirring, momentous events of the day. He could be abstemious all the time, and could endure fasts and other privations when necessary; but with him it was a duty to look to his health and to preserve his body by proper nourishment and care. He knew that the lawful appetites were given to men to be lawfully enjoyed. In accordance with this knowledge, he partook of physical enjoyment, and allowed each appetite its legitimate indulgence. On this account, he has been called by some of his enemies a sensualist—a man who broke through all restraint to pamper his bodily appetites. How far from the truth this accusation is, will be seen at once when we look at the work he did, the spirituality he manifested, and the influence for goodness and morality he exerted on his associates. And it may be well to remark that the same accusation was hurled against the purest One that ever lived. Messiah, himself, was called a wine-bibber and a glutton, because he did not manifest the same asceticism that John the Baptist and others displayed.

Yet it has now come to be admitted, by those who are not extremists, that asceticism is not religion. Abstemiousness is a part of true religion, but so also is the proper use of the physical appetites with which man is endowed. Joseph Smith understood this matter fully, and ordered his life along the lines of proper abstemiousness and temperance. He enjoyed life in all its legitimate

phases, but he did not pamper the appetites or misuse the powers of his physical organism.

He was possessed of strong feelings. Yet these feelings and his strong temper were under perfect control. With his strength he combined, when necessary, the mildness of a lamb. When the rights of his people were assailed, he manifested the strength of a lion in their defense. Yet there was no one who could endure longer, when necessary, personal wrong. Two instances will serve to illustrate this characteristic. When he was approaching his death, and his prophetic foresight had apparently told him it was imminent, his thought was all for his people and the preservation of their rights. During his last public address, standing before the people of Nauvoo in the strength of his splendid personality, he drew his sword and uttered the words:

I call God and angels to witness that I have unsheathed my sword with a firm and unalterable determination that this people shall have their legal rights, and be protected from mob violence, or my blood shall be spilt upon the ground like water, and my body consigned to the silent tomb. While I live I will never tamely submit to the dominion of cursed mobocracy!

The other incident, as related by the prose-poet, Parley P. Pratt, serves to illustrate how long he would endure personal insult and discomfort before rebuking his tormentors; and how he arose in his wrath even then, not so much on account of his own acute sufferings, as because the wrongs of his people were being brutally recounted. He and his associates were in a jail in the small village of Richmond, in Ray County, Missouri. The guard was composed of mobocrats who had committed unmentionable crimes against the Saints at Far West. In their brutal way they told of the terrible things they had done, mentioning all the revolting details. Night after night their vile language had assaulted the ears of the prisoners, and yet Joseph Smith and the others had endured it. But as they continued to particularize the deeds they had committed, and the prophet became aroused beyond endurance, he asserted the magnificent manliness of his nature. Apostle Pratt's account of the incident is so striking, that I insert it:

On a sudden he arose to his feet and spoke in a voice of thunder, or as the roaring lion, uttering, as near as I can recollect, the following words:

"Silence, ye fiends of the infernal pit! In the name of Jesus Christ, I rebuke

you and command you to be still; I will not live another minute and hear such language. Cease such talk, or you or I die this instant."

He ceased to speak. He stood erect in terrible majesty. Chained, and without a weapon, calm, unruffled, and dignified as an angel, he looked down upon the quailing guards, whose knees smote together, and who, shrinking into a corner, or crouching at his feet, begged his pardon, and remained quiet until exchange of guards.

I have seen ministers of justice, clothed in ministerial robes, and criminals arraigned before them, while life was suspended upon a breath, in the courts of England; I have witnessed a congress in solemn session to give laws to nations; I have tried to conceive of kings, of royal courts, of thrones and crowns, and of emperors assembled to decide the fate of kingdoms; but dignity and majesty have I seen but once, as it stood in chains, at midnight, in a dungeon, in an obscure village in Missouri.

It has been said that a strong temper is an excellent thing to have, if one can only keep it. A temper commensurate with his strength Joseph Smith certainly had. His ability to keep it, even under the most trying circumstances, was frequently illustrated. And the true test of a man's greatness is found, not so much in the possession of will power, temper, physical or mental strength, and appetites and passions, as in his ability to control them. No man was ever great without these; yet no man can ever be great who does not control them. And the mastery over self shows greatness commensurate with the powers of the self that is brought under control. Judged by this standard, with the knowledge that he was one of the strongest of men in feelings, will, and physical power, Joseph Smith, in his mastery over these elements of self, looms far above the average man.

Joseph Smith had a great mission to perform. He stood, by Divine appointment, at the head of the greatest Gospel Dispensation in the history of the world. A man of smaller caliber might have felt unduly the greatness of his calling, and assumed a certain superiority or affected an unwarranted solemnity. In such a case he would have made himself ridiculous. In this day and age of the world, the man who is not natural, is never taken seriously. A sense of humor is a prime requisite even for the man of pre-eminently serious affairs. In this respect Joseph Smith was not wanting. Skillful as he was in physical bouts, he was not less so in tests of wit and repartee. This characteristic was a part, and a most important one, of his strong human nature. He may have

offended by keen wit, delicate humor, broad satire, the ultra-pious ones who would expect to find in a prophet a man more sanctimonious than themselves; but to those who knew him best, this trait of his character was one of the most delightful.

A noble courtesy was another of his admirable traits. It mattered not to whom he spoke, or what the circumstances of his social or conversational intercourse, he was always the considerate, courteous gentleman. Whether taking part in controversy with the great men of the nation on affairs of state; or mingling with his friends in serious converse or social recreation; or undergoing difficulties which would try the souls of smaller men; or directing words of kindness to children and the helpless in distress, his words and actions were dignified with the gentle courtesy which distinguishes the truly great man. In connection with this trait, I would mention another, closely allied to it: his tender heart and easily aroused sympathies. Never were his ears closed to the cry for help and succor; never did he withhold the assistance which he was able to give to the worthy. Indeed, it has been charged against him that he was not sufficiently careful in discriminating against the unworthy who appealed to him for help. Cold-blooded and calculating he could not be. It was not his nature. Even in the difficulties and wrongs which he endured in the later years of his life, he held out a hand of sympathy and succor to friends and enemies alike.

And he fulfilled the great law of giving, in that he gave not only what he had, but what he was. His life as well as his substance was at the command of others. No more striking illustration of this trait can be named, than his willingness to minister to the sick, and use the wonderful healing power he possessed. I am reminded of the time when he walked from one fever-stricken house to another, along the river bank of the malaria-infected town of Commerce, and healed the sick and raised the dying; until, the calls becoming too numerous for his time and strength, he continued his own labors, and sent his handkerchief by the hand of Wilford Woodruff, with the promise, miraculously fulfilled, that those who touched it should be healed through their faith, even as if he himself were there. To such a cause as this, he was willing to give his strength, his health, and, if need be, his life. Nor

was this element of giving and of sympathy lacking in his death; he died not only that his testimony might be sealed with his blood, but that his people might be saved from the mob.

In his death, another phase of his character was illustrated:—his affectionate disposition, and especially his love for his brother Hyrum. From the sad moment when he sorrowfully turned his steps back to Nauvoo, with the heart-breaking words, "If my life is of no value to my friends, it is of none to me," to the moment when he cried, "O, my dear brother Hyrum," to the stricken brother,—the last words he uttered to mortal man—he was solicitous for his people and for that brother. Fain would he have insisted on Hyrum's being spared martyrdom, had not the faithful brother clung to him to the death. If ever, in these modern times, there has been an illustration of man's love for man, "surpassing the love of a woman," that illustration was found in the case of Joseph and Hyrum Smith. And yet this affection was but the love, in concentrated form, which he felt for his people, and for the world. It was a love for all mankind, wicked as well as righteous. He discriminated between the man and his deeds; and he was wont to say, "I love all men, but I don't like the actions of some of them."

Of his bravery and coolness in the midst of danger, and his willingness to bear more than his share of hardship and peril, I need hardly speak. This characteristic is manifested in all the acts of his life. He was pre-eminently self-sacrificing. And I am not sure but that, when the list of earth's great ones is made complete, the greatest will be those who have been most noted for the sacrifice of self to a noble cause. As it will be headed by the name of Messiah, the greatest of all in this as in other noble traits, it will contain that of the leader of this dispensation as among the most glorious.

Joseph Smith was fitted by nature and by Divine endowment, to be a leader. We hear a great deal about "personal magnetism." It is a term used, for the want of a better one, to designate the quality which draws men to a man, and makes them his followers. Of this quality Joseph Smith had enough to mark him as one of the world's greatest leaders. A person's fitness for leadership is not truly tested in the midst of ease and pleasant surroundings.

Washington, Lee, Greene, and other noted generals, are called great not because of their opportunities, but because of what they did in spite of lack of opportunities. Their true leadership consisted in the strength and devotion of their followers in the face of difficulties the most appalling. Judged from this standpoint, the work of Joseph Smith stands pre-eminent. As in the darkest night the dimmest stars are visible and brightest, so in the darkness of the times in which he labored, is the devotion of his followers the most manifest and touching. And the quality by which he held them to him, and deserved and gained their unfaltering trust and devotion, constituted him one of the world's greatest leaders. Whether personal magnetism, inherent strength and goodness, or inspiration, it is called, or all these together, Joseph Smith possessed the quality of leadership to a marked degree.

Of his naturalness and true humility, mention has already been made. This trait made him great in the work to which he was called; for, next to pronounced spirituality, it was the characteristic most needed to fit a man to stand at the head of the Latter-day Dispensation of the gospel. No task looking to the comfort and advancement of his people, was too menial for him to perform; no hardship too severe for him to share with his friends. In work and in play, in joy and in sorrow, in prosperity and in adversity, he was one of the people. Their hopes were his hopes, their hardships his hardships, their toil his toil, and his were their joys and their sorrows. "He that is great among you, let him be the servant of all." No leader has more nobly followed this admonition of Jesus, than Joseph Smith. A humble, submissive servant of God, he was, whenever occasion offered, the devoted servant of God's people.

And this brings us to his great, crowning, overruling characteristic, the one which dominated all his work, and shaped not only his own life but the destiny of his people:—his spirituality and willingness to be guided by inspiration. It was a trait much needed in the age in which he lived and labored. The era of materialism was setting in, and its influence was sweeping the land like a flood. The time was opportune for the coming of a man with the mission of restoring the true spiritual faith, and of leading men's minds to it. To perform this mission, he must himself incline



toward the spiritual element in life, and be dominated by it. This requirement Joseph Smith met fully and perfectly. How well he was fitted for this great spiritual work, let the results of his labors testify. And yet, we do not need to depend entirely upon his followers for a testimony of this wonderful trait in the character of our Prophet. A writer for the *New York Herald*, who saw Joseph Smith at Nauvoo, in 1842, speaks thus of him:

In the present infidel, irreligious, ideal, geological, animal-magnetic age of the world, some such singular prophet as Joseph Smith is required to preserve the principle of faith, and to plant some new germs of civilization that may come to maturity in a thousand years. While modern philosophy, which believes in nothing but what you can touch, is overspreading the Atlantic states, Joseph Smith is creating a spiritual system, combined also with morals and industry, that may change the destiny of the race. We certainly want some such prophet to start up, take a big hold of the public mind—and stop the torrent of materialism that is hurrying the world into infidelity, immorality, licentiousness, and crime.

This is a sincere tribute to the spirituality of Joseph Smith, from one, upon meeting him, who recognized that as one of his great characteristics. In the realm of the spiritual he labored. It was his natural element. From the fateful spring morning, when, in answer to his fervent prayer, he saw the spiritual effulgence, and then looked upon the Father and the Son, through all the scenes of his life, he found his greatest work, and his chief solace in the spiritual. And in his communion with the heavenly beings who vouchsafed him visitations, and in his rapt contemplation of visions of glory, and in his enjoyment of the fulness of spiritual power, he manifested the highest, the greatest, the most blessed of all the traits God can give to his children, the power to comprehend the spiritual, and to enter into communion with it.

An incomplete, unsatisfactory character-sketch of the man, Joseph Smith, is presented above. Indeed, it were difficult for any person to make a complete characterization of such a man as he. His character is portrayed in the work he founded; and as it grows and flourishes, and spreads its beneficence abroad, in it will be seen the reflection, more plainly than man can portray it, and growing clearer and brighter as the years roll on, of the wonderful personality of the great leader, and the gentle, bold, and noble man who was its earthly founder.

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