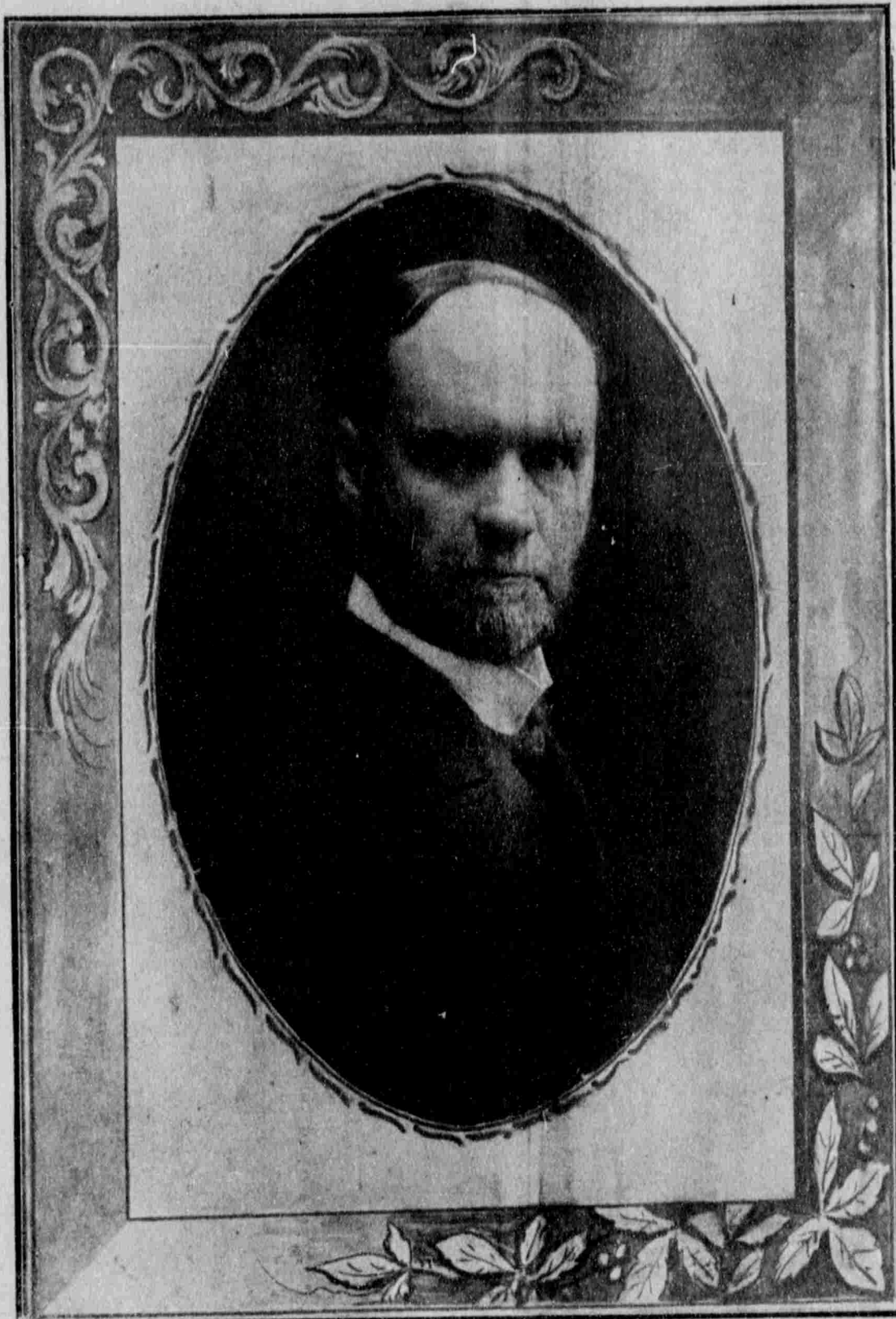


A MORMON EPIC.

Bishop Whitney Produces a Great Poem.

Eternal Truth, the Mighty Theme of the Dispensation, Told in Verse Sublime.



BISHOP ORSON F. WHITNEY.

An Event in Western Literature—President Paul's Analysis and Eulogy of the Work.

A GREAT Mormon poem has appeared, or is about to appear, as soon as it can find a suitable publisher. Such is the verdict rendered by a delighted, though necessarily limited circle of literary friends of our gifted fellow townsman, Bishop O. F. Whitney, the author of the work, which has been read by him from manuscript before a series of gatherings in private homes. The first two readings were given at the residence of Col. and Mrs. N. W. Clayton, on the evenings of the 10th and 11th of December, the third around the hearthstone of Mr. and Mrs. Geo. D. Poyer, some eight days later, while the fourth and final session is announced to be with Hon. and Mrs. F. S. Richards tomorrow evening. Among those who have listened to the poem thus far are Hon. and Mrs. B. H. Roberts, Judge and Mrs. W. H. King, President and Mrs. J. H. Paul, Dr. James E. Talmage, Major and Mrs. R. W. Young, Mr. and Mrs. R. S. Wells, Gen. and Mrs. C. S. Burton, Mr. and Mrs. H. G. Whitney, Gen. and Mrs. John Q. Cannon, Mr. and Mrs. L. A. Culmer, Prof. and Mrs. J. J. McClellan, and a few others including those first named.

The occasion—for in this sense all these sessions may be considered as one—has been exalting in the highest degree. Each reading has been preceded by an explanation, in terms simple yet impressive, of the motive and scope of the work; the sessions have been opened and closed with prayer; while the musical preludes and interludes, both vocal and instrumental, have been most appropriately chosen to emphasize the changing aspect of the subject as the author has progressed in his mighty theme. It will be evident, therefore, that none of the elements of the "social" or even the "social" function—accepting the usual significance of these terms—were intended. Rather was it designed to assemble a critical few, who might perchance partake in a measure of the poet's inspiration and whose suggestions and comments might aid him in strengthening or polishing his work. No matter how far his effort may seem to most of them to be beyond criticism, it will be found, no doubt, that the sympathetic mingling with and expression of these friends have led to alterations and improvements of which he and they, as well as a much wider circle of later auditors, together with hosts of future readers, will realize the benefits.

Alison is made to later hearers, because of the hope that a larger audience, and perhaps a no less friendly or critical one than it was possible to assemble for the trial reading, will soon have the pleasure of listening to the poem from the author's lips; while the allusion to future readers is with the expectation that at no distant day the work will receive handsome and effective publication, and thus be placed in a position to afford the pleasure and accomplish the good which its writer has desired.

Of the theme itself, no more can here be said in weak and halting phrase than it is lofty, glorious and god-like. Of its treatment another and a more analytical pen must write. The reading has not been marked by straining after elocutionary effect, yet the delivery was musical, at times thrilling, and always impressive. Of the work involved in the production, few can estimate the magnitude through the measurement of hours, weeks, months and years. While it must have been an excessive and unceasing strain upon his every mental fibre, it has nevertheless been a labor of love with the poet, and that it will prove an unending source of encouragement to the saint, and a potent agency in diffusing truth in most admirable expression throughout the world, is the promise held out by every page, and the hope and belief entertained by every one who has thus far heard it.

One of the warmest admirers of Bishop Whitney's sublime work is President Joshua H. Paul of the Latter-day Saints' University, who furnishes to the "News" the following analysis of the poem for publication:

THEME AND PURPOSE.
"Bliss—An Epic of the Ages" is the title of a new poem from the pen of Bishop O. F. Whitney, which it has been my pleasure and privilege to read in the original manuscript. In the construction of this work the author has been engaged in his leisure moments during the past two and a half years, though the materials for it have necessarily been much longer in gathering. The poem really represents the matured study of a lifetime. It aims to present in poetic form the whole vast theme of "Mormonism." Historically as well as doctrinally, so far as it has been revealed through the Prophet Joseph Smith and his successors, this theme is maintained. As its title announces, the poem is truly an epic of the ages; not only the ages of time, but also the aeons of eternity. It seeks to embody the truth, past, present and future, of the great plan of salvation. This plan, the author shows, was framed by divine intelligence, and revealed from God to man through prophets previously elected in the heavens and later standing upon the earth at the head of a series of Gospel dispensations. No modern names are used, excepting those of a classic character, but the historical personages introduced are described or referred to in such a way as to leave no doubt of their identity. The avowed purpose of the author has been to construct a "Mormon" poem, from a "Mormon" standpoint upon the subject and in the spirit of "Mormonism," and it occurs to the reviewer that the perusal of this work by poetic readers, unwilling to read a religious tract or listen to a Gospel sermon, is most likely to induce a further study of the faith, and thus assist in spreading a knowledge of the truth which the Latter-day Saints have received.

The real subject of the poem—the very heart of it—is that sublime mystery which has commanded the attention and challenged the attempted analysis of every deep thinker who has pondered the problem of human knowledge. Emerson calls it the Universal Mind. "There is one mind," he says, "common to all individual men. Every man is an inlet of the same. * * * Who hath access to this universal mind, is a party to all that is or can be done." Herbert Spencer, somewhat crudely identifies it with the persistence of force and calls it the "infinite and eternal energy from which all things proceed." Pope conceived that this infinite intelligence "spreads undivided, operates unspent," etc. For Plato it was the ideas pre-existent in the mind of God, to which man attains in his right reason, and even in his perceptions. By modern philosophy truth is recognized as the mind of God; and when we think truly, it is claimed, it is not we that think, but the universal reason that thinks in us. Now, to the religious mind, this universal intelligence to which he will may attain, is simply the inspiration of the Eternal One, illuminating the minds of men; and this power has, in religious revelation, been personified. By Joseph Smith the Holy Ghost is declared to be a personage—"a personage of spirit." The Holy Ghost, the inspirer of ancient and modern seers, is the real subject of this poem; and the aim is to show to what purpose the inspiration of heaven rests upon men. This idea runs like a golden strand from prelude to epilogue. The poem has the merit of every laudable undertaking in literature—the author has something to say. He has a message to deliver, and is fully conscious of its importance. He concentrates his powers and literally "wrecks his thought" upon the truths he presents and the images he portrays. His subject—the Spirit of Revelation—stirs him to do his best work, and right nobly is the mighty task undertaken.

ANALYSIS OF THE POEM.
The poem consists of twelve parts; including the prelude and the epilogue; but the body of the work is contained in the ten intervening sections or cantos, each having a separate caption or subtitle. The prelude gives the poet's motive in writing, and in the first canto, "As From a Dream," he describes his youthful ideals:
Glory and Love—these were my guides divine,
The planet-passions of my destiny.
The Baal and Astaroth to whom I bowed,
A Canaanite, in rapt idolatry.
But there came to him "a strange and stern awakening." Storms of misfortune dispelled delusion's dreams. Truth spoke to his soul. The ideals of youthfulness were displaced by those of manly reason and divine revelation,

rising like resurrected beings from the ruin and desolation of his former phantasies. God was now the object of his worship. Beauty was not divinity, though still divine, and especially so.

The beauty of the restful and the risen, Of Paradise and Glory's higher home, Spirit and element forever joined, Bright symbol of best union yet to be, When heaven and earth are wed eternally.

In other words, his vision, sharpened by the Spirit of Truth to see things, not as they seem, but as they are, was still appreciative of his former ideals, now viewed in their proper light and due proportions; and he proceeds to speak of beauty and of love in a fine apostrophe to their chief earthly embodiments.

His ideals of glory undergo a similar change, and he is no longer deceived by the world's estimate of greatness:
Be not beguiled—not what men think and say,
But what God sees and knows is what avails.

And after a discussion of the true standards of greatness, "mightiness of mind" and "grandeur of the soul," the poet goes on to give his philosophy of life—"why men are not alike in magnitude." Truth, teaching charity, gave him to discern:

Why souls, like stars, all differ in degree,
And cannot show an even excellence
Because not equal in nobility;
Since some, than others, have more summits climbed,
More light absorbed, more moral might evolved,
Are wiser, worthier, than those they lead
Through precept's vales, up steep example's height.
To where Love, Beauty, Wealth, Power,
Glory shine,
While some, innately noble, are borne
By weight of weaknesses inherited.

The first canto is thus a declaration—a sound and worthy exposition—of the author's principles and philosophy. In short, it portrays the poet's spiritual awakening—his preparation for singing this song of the ages.

Canto second, "The Soul of Song," is the most strikingly poetic of the series of poems that forms this work. It is an original picture—a pure creation of the author. Some of the lines recall Byron's apostrophe to the ocean. The poet seems most delightfully at home for he is on his "native hills":
Where'er I roam, and still have loved to roam
From early childhood's scarce remembered day,
And found my pensive soul's congenial home
Far from the depths where human passions play,
Born at their feet, my own have learned to stray
Among these pathless heights,
And feel,
As now, the mind assume a loftier sway,
Soaring for themes that past its portals steal,
Beyond its power to reach or utterance to reveal.

After a soliloquy and an address to the mountains as the silent repositories of ancient knowledge, the poet breaks forth in this sublime strain:
And must I be as mute, O silent Mount!
Muse of all Melody! Shall I not sing—
Burst these dumb bars, when e'en you babbling fount,
May find in every breeze a waiting wing,
Afar its lightest murmured word to fling?
Where art thou, ancient soul of solemn Asleep? Then wake! Wherefore art slumbering?
The world hath need of thee and waiteth long—
Strike, strike again thy harp, and thrill the raptured throng!

In response to this invocation the poet is visited by an august, antique spirit personage—"a stately form of giant stature tall"—who declares himself,
Truth's minstrel minister,
Ancient of Time and of Eternity,
Spirit of Song that moved the Hebrew seer,
Voice of the Stars ere Earth's nativity;
and who bids the bard strike the harp he gives him—Eternal Truth his theme.
Was it a vision of my destiny?
Upon the Mount, as erst, I stood alone—
And naught was there of Muse or minstrelsy;
Save that afar still trembled that strange tone,
And something said within: That harp is now thine own.

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Canto third is entitled "Elect of Eloheim." It is the beginning of the poem proper, introducing the Christ theme, both in its pre-existent and its earthly phases. This canto is, in the opinion of the writer of this review, the most important in the whole work. It is also the strongest and clearest, displaying the poetic power, discretion and taste of the artist more fully than do any of the others. The admirable mental balance of the author in that delicate situation in which he must put words into the mouth of Deity, is most gratifying to the sensitive reader of this hazardous feat, which is accomplished with a skill not excelled by the best writers on this theme. Having portrayed the choosing of the Christ in the heavens and his descent as the Babe of Bethlehem, the poet says:
Oh wondrous grace! Will Gods go down
Thus low that men may rise?
Imprisoned here the Mighty One
Who reigned in yonder skies?
Hark to that chimel—the tongue of Time
Now tells the hour of Noon;
A dying world is welcoming
The Godhead's gracious boon.

The earth history of the Christ is then treated—the pathetic story culminating in the Savior's crucifixion and return to glory.

Canto fourth, "Night and the Wilderness," is an allegorical, and from the standpoint of the Latter-day Saint, a literal view as well, of the Christian dispensation. It is a glance at the decline and fall—the apostasy of the primitive Church from the ancient faith. The Church is symbolized by "a Woman, on whose wondrous brow a crown of stars, twelve gems of glory shine." Persecuted, low-trodden, mutilated—"as torn Hypatia in her martyrdom," she compromises with her foes, and
Shorn of her beams, as Samson of his might,
Flies on an Eagle's wings, aloft, afar,
Into the wilderness; there biding still,
Half hopeful and half fearful of the dawn.

The greater orbs having set in the death of the Savior, His forerunner and the Apostles, lesser lights—which the reader will readily understand to signify Columbus, Luther, Shakespeare, Washington and spirits of that class—arise and illuminate to some extent this night of history—the dark ages.

But Morn must rise, and Night dismiss her stars;
And Truth the Perfect Truth the part fulfill.

Just at present Great Britain is running up a big bill for fencing for the sole purpose of keeping the good will of the United States. The dominion government is out of pocket to the extent of \$125,000 in such a matter. For many years past there have been constant disputes between the cattle men

of Canada and those of the United States about animals which have strayed across the border line. The matter is of just as much concern to one country as to the other, but Canada has willingly saddled herself with the whole burden. She is building a strong wire fence some 500 miles in length along the boundary line between Alberta and the state of Montana. This, it is hoped, will put an end to all bad blood.

The most striking example in recent years was the action of the United States when the news was received that the island of Martinique had been devastated by an earthquake. At the suggestion of President Roosevelt Congress voted the sum of \$500,000 for the relief of the sufferers, although there was no actual precedent justifying the act. The assistance from the United States was given far in advance of that from France, to which the island belonged, and while the deputies were

still talking about what to do the help from America was on the way. The action won the approval of every civilized nation in the world, and placed American fact far to the fore.

Another case of American good will was shown during the recent famine in India.

A big subscription was got up among people all over the Union to buy wheat for the starving Hindoos. No less than \$500,000 was raised from various private sources, and 5,000 tons of grain were purchased. So far the matter had been one of private charity, but at that point the government stepped in. Congress chartered, at a cost of several thousand dollars, the steamer Quito, and told the contributors to put their wheat aboard it. Rear Admiral Ryden was sent to see the vessel off from New York. As the Quito steamed down the river the British and American flags were displayed together, and hearty cheers given by a great crowd.

Then follows a canto of remarkable power and insight, entitled "The Arcana of the Infinite," in which are summarized those sublime doctrines which are embodied in the revelations given directly to the Prophet of the last dispensation. This canto undertakes to

depict, with Joseph and his predictions as a type, that "torrent of truth," that "river of prophecy" which, flowing from eternity into time, and from time back into eternity, is the means whereby Jehovah, through His messengers, enlightens and redeems mankind. The modern Prophet is declared to stand spiritually in the very presence of Divinity.

Where Truth, the Has-Been, Is and Ever-to-be,
With seas of Righteousness—the salt that saves—
The Great White Throne with endless glory haves,
He walks and talks with God, as friend with friend,
He reads the Book of Time from end to end;
And in the Volume of Eternity Peruses past and far futurity.

The poet then follows the Prophet, in a great vision of the dispensations, down to the establishment of the perfect Church, resplendent in the sheen of risen Righteousness:
Grey grows to crimson, crimson melts to gold,
And dawns the day by starry night
Whose twinkling prophets pale their silvery rays,
Lost in the golden light of latter days.

No summary can do justice to the exposition that follows, but the treatment of the whole may be judged from the selection here given:

Man a divinity in embryo,
Who, ere he reign above, must serve below,
His spirit in earth-element baptize,
By death and resurrection sink and rise,
Nor rest content with restful Paradise,
But soar to sunnier realms, to loftier skies,
Maker and man but Time's antithesis—
Time's opposites, and not Eternity's;
The gulf that parts the lower from the higher,
Bridged by development of son to sire.

Other characteristic "Mormon" tenets are treated with similar comprehensiveness and freedom, the canto being a concise, luminous and faithful exposition of each topic undertaken.

I believe that enough has now been quoted to show with tolerable fulness the scope and character of this work, and to illustrate the style and method of the author. The poem will repay, while it requires, careful study. Every sentence, often every line, replete with thought and virile in expression, requires its annotation. It is a work that calls for meditation and reflection, and will scarcely serve for whiling away an idle hour. Of the remaining cantos only a brief synopsis will be given.

"The Lifting of the Ensign" signifies the organization of the Latter-day Church, with an incidental description of the Zion of Enoch as a type and foreshadowing of the modern Zion, which it is the mission of "Mormonism" to establish. Incidentally also are portrayed religious, political and social phases of modern times, with those errors and abuses which the restored Gospel was designed to correct and abolish. "Upon the Shoulders of the Philistines" is the caption indicating the westward movement of the Church through its various migrations from Fayette to Nauvoo, where, in the closing canto, "The Parted Veil," the Prophet, addressing his people just before his martyrdom, foretells the great future in store for them. The epilogue, "The Angel Ascendant," is mainly an apostrophe to Elias, the Spirit of Restoration.

The author has evidently taken no work for his model. His plan and treatment are original. For purposes of variety, and to suit the ever-changing themes, several different meters are employed—chiefly blank verse, the Spenserian stanza and the English couplet. This departure from stereotyped methods and the monotony of jingling verse is both pleasing and effective.

In conclusion, I desire to express the admiration I feel both for the plan and the execution of this magnificent work. To read it is an inspiration, not less on account of the truths it contains, than because of the majesty, the stern, stately dignity of the language employed, and the lofty style chosen and consistently sustained throughout. Believing, as I do, that this epic is the worthy creation of a true poet, I commend it without reservation to the critics and literati as a work of art, and to the people to whom it is primarily addressed as a choice poetic exposition of a theme that must always become the latest and severest study of every noble mind—the Everlasting Gospel of the Son of God.

WHAT NATIONAL POLITENESS COSTS.

Exchange of Courtesies Between Great Powers a Luxury.

International courtesy is one of the most expensive of all the costly indulgences of the world powers and there is apparently no way out of it, as it is essential to the peace of nations, says the Chicago Tribune.

The visit of Prince Henry of Prussia to the United States is a good example of the sums that are applied to the po-

lit relations of one government with another. The little journey to this country cost the kaiser somewhere in the neighborhood of \$100,000, but it was considered worth the cost, as it put the two nations on a far better footing than they were before.

An illustration of the same spirit of courtesy is shown in the case of the re-

lief ship Resolute, sent out by England in 1852. The ship was caught in the ice, and, being in extreme danger, was abandoned and was supposed to have sunk. But two years later it was found quite intact by Mr. George Henry, an American whaler, who brought it back to New York.

Being a derelict, and the British government abandoning its claim, it became, of course, the property of the finder. The American government thereupon bought it and thoroughly fitted it out at a cost of no less than \$200,000. Under command of Capt. Hartstene it was sent across the Atlantic and presented to Queen Victoria. It arrived at Southampton on Dec. 32, 1856, was visited by her majesty four

days later, and formally handed over on the 30th.

When, 24 years later, the old ship was broken up a handsome desk was made from its timber and sent by the queen as a present to the president. It still stands in the White House in Washington.

The visit of President Loubet to Russia in April last was no cheap matter, either. Both countries paid pretty heavily for it. An immense portable diningroom was constructed and put aboard the Montcalm before the president sailed. This was put together at Cronstadt, and in it the head of the French republic gave a luncheon to all the Russian royals. The cost of this building alone was \$12,000. The pres-

ents which the president took with him for the czar's little girls cost as much more. In Russia the great expense was the police precautions. An Anarchist plot was discovered just before the president landed. It is said that between \$25,000 and \$50,000 was the cost of bringing up police and soldiers to guard the visitor. It is computed that during the last six or seven years France has bought \$1,500,000 worth of Russian securities, for which there is little or no market outside Paris and Brussels. It is to be hoped, for her own sake, that France has not paid this gigantic sum away merely for politeness sake.

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