

## INTERVIEW WITH BRIGHAM YOUNG.

CEDAR CITY, April 30, 1877.

Having received at Salt Lake, on the 12th inst., a telegram from Brigham Young saying, "If you come quick you will find me at St. George," I started early next morning on the journey leading in that direction, across the vast deserts, over the wintry divides and through cañons of Southern Utah. A second dispatch apprised me on the way that the President would leave St. George for the north before I could possibly arrive there. Cedar City, the remote little Mormon settlement from which this letter is written, was appointed as the place of meeting. Here, at the foot of an enormous mountain, and looking westward across a desolate plain toward the scene of the Mountain Meadows massacre and of John D. Lee's execution, I was welcomed this morning at the home of the hospitable Mormon Bishop Henry Lunt. Late in the afternoon President Brigham Young and his party, in a train of five carriages, drawn by four mules or horses each, also drew up at the Bishop's home. As evening descended lights shot through the windows from the broad fireplaces within, and a supper was spread in the dining room amid sounds of jollity and cheer.

Shortly before eight o'clock, having returned from a long walk, I entered the house and was introduced to John W. Young, who prepared the way for my audience with his father, the President. Crossing the hall, he led me into a large or grand room, beaming with light from logs of pine and cedar, and containing a small and distinguished company. Near the walls sat or stood several Mormon elders of this and neighboring districts. In front of them two or three bishops were seated. Grouped around the centre table were several of the most elevated dignitaries among the latter-day priesthood. John W. Young, First Counsellor of the President, took a seat with his back to the fire, looking as handsome, as wise and amiable as he is really known to be. Brigham Young, Jr., was not present, being confined to his bed by illness. To the right of John W. Young sat Daniel H. Wells, Vice President, his great head, iron gray hair and beard and resolute features making a picture of themselves. Wells was one of the earliest Mormon emigrants across the Plains from Nauvoo, and has since been among the strongest defenders of the latter-day faith. He commanded the Mormon army which checked the advance of Johnson's troops, 1857-8. Opposite Wells lounged in his overcoat, and at his accustomed ease, George Q. Cannon, First [and] Apostle of the Church and Delegate of the Territory to Washington. His face glowed with a benevolent expression and his manner showed all that politeness which is natural to him. In the furthest corner and in shadow, however, sat the most commanding person in the room. Brigham Young never looked more thoroughly like the patriarch that his people love to call him than he did on this occasion. His tall, broad form was enveloped from shoulders to feet in a robe or cape of dark cloth generously edged with fur, a glimpse of the red lining of which showed from a corner turned up over his shoe. He wore a hat of peculiar shape, yet not unbecoming to his looks or to denote his dignity. Under his pale and pleasant face was revealed a spotless cravat, and the huge collar of silver fox which flared away from his throat and back behind his head set off his features finely.

My reception in the "Grand Room" was graceful and hearty, and after I had been introduced as "Mr. —," who represents the New York Herald, I was placed in the vacant seat at the centre table.

The following conversation then took place, lasting without intermission nearly three and a half hours. I opened it by describing as accurately as I could the excitement, in the East and West, caused by recent developments in regard to the Mountain Meadows massacre, and the strong disposition evinced in some quarters to fix the responsibility on President Young. I instanced especially Lee's testimony respecting George A. Smith, one of the twelve apostles at that time, whom Lee asserts went forward ahead of the Arkansas emigrant company, preaching against them and stirring up the feelings of the people against them

until the time was ripe for their destruction.

**Brigham Young**—George A. Smith visited this whole southern region regularly, and held meetings, as we are doing now. In fact, he was the founder of Parowan—the first settlement to the north—on his way home northward. This was the year of the massacre. They met the company of the Arkansas emigrants not far from Fillmore. It was at Meadow Creek, I believe. Some of the emigrant company came up to him and passed some remarks, inquiring about the roads, &c. Brother George A. Smith gave them all the desired information. Some of the cattle belonging to the company died, which they poisoned, and from the effects of the poisoned meat some of the Indians who found and consumed the carcasses died. These carcasses also poisoned some springs. This raised the wrath of the Indians.

Here President Young turned to Daniel H. Wells, his second counsellor, saying, "Brother Wells, do you remember if Brother George A. was down here at that time for anything special?"

**Daniel H. Wells**—No, sir, he was not. He was preaching in the settlements between here and Salt Lake, as we usually do. He had part of his family living in Parowan, having built a residence there, and his being here was only one of several visits.

**Brigham Young**—Brother George A. Smith's testimony in regard to this is published to the world, and I believe it to be true. It can be found among Howard's reports. George A. Smith knew no more about that company or about their being interfered with than you did in New York. Had he possessed that knowledge I would certainly have heard of it, for he would have told me of it. He knew nothing about the company until he met them on his return north, near Fillmore. There was at that time no telegraph line running down here; no mails were carried to Utah. The United States government had stopped the mails, and we had no mails running from settlement to settlement as we have now.

**Correspondent**—The conviction is settled in the east, especially by the testimony on the Lee trial, that there was some powerful direction of the part taken by the whites in the massacre. This conviction is strengthened by the statements in Judge Cradlebaugh's speech.

**Brigham Young**—There is no doubt that the affair was directed by John D. Lee, and he evidently was a white man.

**Correspondent**—It appears incredible to outsiders that Lee would have undertaken a task like that on his own responsibility; the responsibility attaches, in their opinion, to the Mormon Church, even to its highest individual officers.

**Brigham Young**—My disposition is such that had I known anything about it I would have gone to that camp and fought the Indians and white men who took part in the perpetration of the massacre to the death, rather than such a deed should have been committed.

**J. W. Young**—John D. Lee, in his testimony, says he informed President Young of the affair when he visited Salt Lake City. I happened to be present when he came in father's office, and I was present during the interview. He commenced to relate the circumstances of the Indians killing the emigrants, but did not intimate a single word about the whites taking part in the killing. When he commenced to speak of the manner of the deed father stopped him, saying that the rumor which had already reached him was so horrifying that he could not bear to hear a recital of it.

**Brigham Young**—I never knew the real facts of this affair until within the last few years. I myself proposed to Governor Cumming, who came here soon after the massacre, to render him and Judge Cradlebaugh every assistance in hunting up the perpetrators and bringing them to justice, and if Mr. Cradlebaugh knows anything about this affair he must know that to be true. That proposition was made in the spring of 1856.

**Daniel H. Wells**—There are plenty of witnesses to that, for I heard him make it in public.

**Correspondent** (to Brigham Young)—What of your own experience as Governor and ex-officio Indian Agent at the time?

**Brigham Young**—Governor Cumming took it away from me. This point too was difficult to reach from

Salt Lake, and besides, according to the rumors that reached us, the people thought themselves that they would do well if they escaped the vengeance of the United States troops. The burden of these rumors was that the Mormons were to be massacred.

**Correspondent**—To what do you ascribe the massacre?

**Brigham Young**—If you were to inquire of the people who live hereabouts, and lived in the country at that time, you would find, if it should be according to what I have heard, that some of this Arkansas company boasted that they had had the promise from the United States that the Mormons were to be used up by the troops, and that they had boasted, too, of having helped to kill Hyrum and Joseph Smith and the Mormons in Missouri, and that they never meant to leave the Territory until similar scenes were enacted here. This, if true, may have embittered the feelings of these who took part in the massacre, and the probabilities are that Lee and his confederates took advantage of these facts and the disturbed state of the country to accomplish their desires for plunder, which under other circumstances would not have been gratified.

**Correspondent**—Have you an opinion of Klingensmith's testimony?

**Brigham Young**—I do not know anything about it.

**Correspondent**—How was it that Lee was at last, and not at first, convicted by a Mormon jury?

**Brigham Young**—The supposition is that there was not evidence enough against him at the first, that there was sufficient evidence against him at the last trial, and that the people of Utah could not obtain justice with any other jury.

**Correspondent**—Considering that your people believe they get their inspiration through you, do they not consider themselves responsible to you for their acts? What excuses them for crime?

**Brigham Young**—What causes me to steal or commit any sin? Do I prompt them? No; but the devil and his agents do. All evil doing is contrary to our covenants and obligations to God and to one another as members of the Church.

**Correspondent**—Do you believe in blood atonement?

**Brigham Young**—I do, and I believe that Lee has not half atoned for his great crime. The Saviour died for all the sins of the world by shedding his blood, and then I believe that he who sheds the blood of man wilfully, by man shall his blood be shed. In other words capital punishment for offenses deserving death, according to the laws of the land. And we believe the execution should be done by the shedding of blood instead of by hanging. If the murderers of Joseph Smith were to come to me now, giving themselves up, I would not feel justified in taking their lives, but I would feel justified in having them taken to Illinois and there tried for murder.

**Correspondent**—Recurring to the Mountain Meadows massacre, you are satisfied that Lee could not have received any previous intimation from the north as to what might be done in the case of the Arkansas company who were coming down from Salt Lake?

**Brigham Young**—None that I have any knowledge of, and certainly none from me.

**Correspondent**—You did not give any direction whatever as to the disposition of the emigrants' effects?

**Brigham Young**—I knew no more about them than you, nor do I to-day. I have heard that they have been made use of, which I suppose is correct. Klingensmith, who was a Mormon and an acting bishop, [I suppose] shared in the spoils, and because he held such a position it is believed that the Church used it.

**Correspondent**—Was he the Church?

**Brigham Young**—No, he was only a poor, miserable sinner.

**Correspondent**—In this southern country do the Bishops exercise the functions of Justices of the Peace?

**Brigham Young**—I do not know that any of them do; and if any do it is not because they are bishops, but because they are elected justices according to the laws of the land.

**Correspondent**—The Mountain Meadows massacre was so unique that many curious questions are asked in regard to it—for instance, why were the Indians angry against the Arkansas emigrants only?

Other emigrant parties were passing through the country and were not molested.

**Brigham Young**—As I understand it, for poisoning the water and poisoning dead cattle, which some of the Indians afterwards ate of and died. I would, however, refer you to the settlers of Crow and Meadow creeks, who lived there at the time.

**Correspondent**—Is it true that George A. Smith advised the people not to sell their grain?

**Brigham Young**—We have been scarce of breadstuffs, and the nature of his counsel was not to use their grain for feeding animals, neither to sell it to emigrants for that purpose; but no such word was ever uttered by him not to sell it for breadstuffs. We have always made a practice of selling wheat and flour to the emigrants for food ever since we came here. And I will say that I am at the defiance of the world to prove that the heads of the Church had anything to do with the Mountain Meadows massacre.

**Correspondent**—With regard to Haight and Higbee. Have you anything to say as to their reasons for getting out of the country?

**Brigham Young**—No, sir. I presume, however, they are trying to evade the law.

**Correspondent**—You do not consider yourself in the least degree responsible for them?

**Brigham Young**—No, sir; not any more than Mr. Beecher or any man of your city is.

**Correspondent**—It is understood at the East that the Mormon Church is a structure far more closely cemented than this would imply—an exclusive organization, standing in the midst of the continent, and governed from the head downward by a system which renders its leaders peculiarly responsible for the people over whom they preside?

**Brigham Young**—If the people over whom I preside do as I tell them to do there never would be such occurrences. But if a member of our Church lies, beats, steals, or kills his neighbor, Brigham Young is not responsible for his evil acts any more than, if a Catholic were to kill, the Pope of Rome would be responsible for his crime. I am responsible only for the doctrines I teach; but I cannot make people do right unless they choose to. I am responsible for no man's acts save my own.

**Young Person** (in shadow)—Then under no circumstances does the power of the President of the Church of the Latter-day Saints extend so far that men's lives are at its mercy. For example, were you to-day to say, "Let such a person be killed," would the wish be in any instance complied with?

**Brigham Young**—If I were to say, "Kill this or that man," I myself would be a murderer; or to say, "Take such a person's money," I would be a highwayman.

**Correspondent**—Yet, is it possible that such a thing could be?

**Brigham Young**—It never has been tried.

**Correspondent**—I want to find out what is the power of the Mormon Church.

**Brigham Young**—The Church has no power to do wrong with impunity any more than any single individual.

**Correspondent**—Yet we know, do we not, Mr. President, that such power has been exercised in the world's history?

**Brigham Young**—You ask a question that does not apply to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

**Daniel H. Wells**—Judge Brochus once said that if Brigham Young "had crooked his finger," &c., he (the Judge) would have been torn to atoms; but all there was to that was, President Young did not crook his finger.

**Correspondent** (to Brigham Young)—What of the alleged order of Danites?

**Brigham Young**—That is all folly.

**Correspondent**—Then, as to the extent of the temporal power of the Church?

**Brigham Young**—It extends only as far as membership is concerned. I may, however, advise a man how to build or improve his garden or field, and if he chooses to be may either receive it or reject it without involving his fellowship.

**Correspondent**—Does not the temporal government of the Church, in extreme cases, assume the functions of courts?

**Brigham Young**—We have what we call bishops' courts, which

amount to referees in ordinary cases of business, and in cases of disagreement between members or immoral conduct. From these courts cases may be appealed to our High Council, which consists of a president, two councillors and twelve members. Their power extends no further than membership in the Church is concerned.

**Correspondent**—How far does the authority of the Church go in dealing with cases of apostasy?

**Brigham Young**—We have nothing to do with them; we let them seriously alone. They say the Church authorities injure them. They lie. We have no dealings at all with such men, for their acts prove their unworthiness of membership in our Church.

**Correspondent**—How do you protect your faith from outside influences—how do you keep it isolated?

**Brigham Young**—We are different from all other Christian sects. We are believers in the Bible, as well as all the revelations the Lord has given to the children of men, as contained in the Old and New Testament, Book of Mormon, and Book of Doctrine and Covenants, and also what he reveals through his authorized servant when speaking or preaching under the influence of the Holy Ghost. When a man speaks by that spirit it is revelation, and if his hearers are possessed of the same they are able to judge of the correctness of what he says. Job says, "There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding." This is what I refer to. The object of my labors among the people is to get them the truth, and the whole truth, as it has been revealed. And they must live so that this good spirit can bear witness to them. Were it otherwise I might deceive them; but as long as they have this spirit no man can deceive them.

**Correspondent**—You, like the old prophets, receive direct revelation from God?

**Brigham Young**—Yes, and not only me, but my brethren also.

**Correspondent**—Does that extend to all the Church, without reserve or rank?

**Brigham Young**—Yes; and it is just as necessary for the mother to possess this spirit in training and rearing her children as for any one else.

**Correspondent**—It is not absolutely necessary, then, that each person receive revelation through you?

**Brigham Young**—Oh, no; through the spirit of Christ, the Holy Ghost; but to dictate the Church is my part of it.

**Correspondent**—And your authority to dictate is given directly by heavenly inspiration.

**Brigham Young**—Yes. I can relate a little circumstance which explains that and which may be interesting to you. When I, with others of the Twelve, was sent to England on a mission in the year 1840, I frequently asked Joseph Smith how we should do this and that? Said he:—"Brother Brigham, I want you to understand doctrine as it is. When you reach England the Lord will teach you what to do, just as he teaches me how to act here." This I found to be verily true. Brother Heber C. Kimball and I started on that mission in poor health, without money and without clothes. My family, too were sick and but poorly off, we having been driven from our houses in Missouri. We started from Terre Haute and travelled to Ohio; every place I stopped I found money in my trunk, and our expenses only amounted to \$86, and as I live I had no more than \$13.50 when I started. I have one gratification—when I tell people that anything is true, they know it is true just as well as I do.

The prophet, whose massive figure occasionally swerved and trembled in its seat in the shadowy corner I have spoken of, lifted his face and both his hands with this last utterance, making an impressive and reverent gesture.

**Correspondent**—If all members of the Mormon Church are thus endowed with divine vision, how is it possible that any number of Mormons could have brought themselves to the commission of such a crime as the Mountain Meadows massacre, if they did not find an excuse for doing so in their own faith, or if they did not believe it would be approved by the Prophet?

**Brigham Young**—Because the men who did it were wicked.

**Correspondent**—What defect is there in the organization of your Church that it allowed the perpe-