

## THE PROPHET'S DEATH!

The following, from the Chicago *Times*, which is in the main correct as concerning the tragedy which is the burden of the article, will be perused with much interest by our readers, coming as it does from a disinterested source—

Some three months since *The Times* published a history of the Mormon church, from its inception, in New York, to the expulsion of the Saints from Missouri, and their subsequent settlement in Illinois. As the particulars of the discovery of the golden tablets in the hill Cumorah, the translation of their hieroglyphics into the Book of Mormon by means of the Urim and Thummim, the propagation of the faith, and the graphic details of the Missouri war, resulting in the capture and ultimate escape of Joseph Smith, the prophet, by bribing his guards, were obtained from the only parties now living who are competent to give reliable information regarding these interesting events, the article attracted much attention, and was of historic value. Another and a more tragic chapter in the eventful life of this strange man remains to be written, and *The Times* is in possession of the facts that enable it to complete the task.

Half a century ago there lived in New York, in the vicinity of Palmyra, where Joseph Smith first became known to fame, a young man named B. W. Richmond, who after warily studied medicine and acquired the title of doctor. He formed Joseph's acquaintance there, and was familiar with the circumstances attending his self-announcement as a prophet. In later years he saw him in Ohio, and observed his course with interest. Still later he met him in Nauvoo, and was an accidental witness of the scenes incident to, and consequent upon, his tragic death at the hands of an Illinois mob. Ten years afterward, partly in compliance with a request of the prophet, made just prior to his assassination, he wrote a full account of the affair, intending to publish it in book form. Various causes combined to delay the publication, and in 1864, twenty years after the occurrence of the events which he had committed to writing, Dr. Richmond died, leaving the manuscript in the hands of his widow, Mrs. Lucinda Richmond, now residing in McGregor, Iowa, by whom it has been carefully treasured until the present time. This manuscript is not only as interesting as a novel and as thrilling as any tragedy, but it is a reliable chronicle of one of the most singular and startling events in the history of the nation, and contains a large amount of information never before given to the public.

Dr. Richmond was not a believer in Mormonism, and would as soon have chosen the devil for his spiritual guide as Joseph Smith, and yet his humanity led him into sympathy with him in many of his acts, and his acquaintance and facilities enabled him to judge him from a standpoint entirely different from that occupied by other historians. His prejudices may have led him into errors, and innocent parties may rest under undeserved censure or imputations, but of this the reader must judge for himself. *The Times* purposes setting forth, in brief, the most striking features of this exciting narrative, quoting the exact language of the writer only when it serves to make the description more forcible.

### TO A PROPER UNDERSTANDING OF THE MATTER,

a knowledge of the character of the prophet, as well as of the situation at Nauvoo in 1844, is essential.

That the common masses that composed the Mormon church regarded Smith as a prophet there is little doubt. The leaders and wise heads could not have looked upon his inspiration as very deep, but they knew full well that their machinery—the mode of their manifesting the belief they held—was well calculated to succeed. That Smith could have regarded himself as inspired, in the usual sense of the term, is more than doubtful; that success had implanted in his mind—which was intuitive rather than logical—the belief that he was born for some great end, is certain; that his death, in its way and manner, has done much to stamp him as a martyr among his friends, is equally true.

The causes which led to the assassination of the Smiths were various. The Mormons, after their expulsion from Missouri, were looked upon by the people of Illinois as an outraged and persecuted people, and were received with open arms to such shelter as they could afford them without inquiry as to what the consequences might be of receiving into their midst a people who differed so widely from them in religious belief. The sagacious Mormon leaders had adroitly selected a site for a city in Hancock county, on the Mississippi river, and from the sad wreck of their Missouri expulsion had commenced, with almost incredible energy, the construction of all sorts of buildings, from the stately brick edifice to the humble slab hut—anything that would give shelter to their suffering people. The site bore the name of Commerce, and lay in a horse-shoe bend of the Mississippi, that noble stream making almost a circuit around the cape. From the point two miles back the land was low, and then rose into a bluff of considerable height, extending from river to river. The central and most prominent point of the bluff was selected as a site for the temple, where it would command a view of almost every house in the city.

Those who could purchase farms of the old settlers in the vicinity in all directions, and the city and colony increased with such rapidity that in a few months the older residents found, instead of a few persecuted strangers, thousands of persons in their midst who professed a new religion, and whose avarice had been increased by outrage, poverty, and disappointment. They now became anxious to sell, at fair prices, and the Saints were as anxious to buy at as low prices as possible. This competition in interest resulted in frequent personal quarrels. The farmers endeavored to prevent supplies of food from reaching the city, and the Saints reciprocated by endeavoring to control the grain market in that region, and to force the farmers to sell at the lowest price.

### THE MASSES OF THE MORMONS

in and about Nauvoo—the name of the new city—were sober and industrious; but there were some who, oppressed by want or actuated by innate cussedness, stole grain, horses, and cattle from the people in the surrounding country. This led to frequent lawsuits, but seldom to conviction or punishment. Combined with this was another fact which bore more heavily on the Mormons than their own acts. Horse thieves from all parts of the country flocked thither and plied their profession on the credit of the Saints. In numerous instances cattle were shot by the political and religious enemies of the Saints, and the slaughter was charged to their account.

Meanwhile newly-converted Saints flocked in from all quarters, and at the end of the first year of the settlement they had done much to repair their losses in Missouri. The legislature incorporated the city, the people were organized into a military force called the Nauvoo Legion, and Joseph Smith was not only prophet of the Lord and preacher to the Saints, but brigadier general and commander of the legion. He now felt his position more secure than formerly, and the leaders adopted every measure, political or pecuniary, that would be likely to give them control of their destiny. With a design to draw from the legislature such acts as would benefit them in their isolated position, they soon began to make their votes felt in the local and state elections, and W. W. Phelps, one of their chief men, became a local judge in the courts of the country. They voted *en masse* with one or the other party, and twice turned the state election in favor of the democracy by casting a solid vote in favor of its gubernatorial candidate. This enraged the opposition, and, under the circumstances, it was easy to elicit the hatred of the opposing religious sects. This was done the more effectually as some of the imprudent Saints claimed that they were not only going to possess Hancock Co., but God was, in their opinion, going to assign to them dominion over the whole earth, and the Gentiles must lick the dust. Their leader was regarded as endowed with the Holy Ghost, and his sword was given him that he might extend and defend his dominions. No other sect could draw such crowds to its solemn feasts and baptismal

gatherings, and the hatred of other denominations was kindled to a flame. Several papers advocated the necessity of driving the Mormons in a body beyond the Rocky Mountains, and the feeling became so great that candidates for the presidency were interrogated as to their view.

### SMITH EVEN PERPETRATED THE FOLLY

of addressing a letter to Henry Clay (written by Phelps), demanding his policy providing he should be elected. The Sage of Ashland replied in vague and general terms, as not to answer seemed unsafe, as the Mormons were supposed to hold the balance of power in the State, and thus a fictitious political consequence attached to their vote. The letter was unsatisfactory, and Joseph Smith was at once proclaimed a candidate for the presidency, with Sidney Rigdon on the ticket for vice-president. That Joseph Smith, who claimed to be anointed with heavenly wisdom, and therefore might have inquired of the Lord by Urim and Thummim—the prophetic stones found at the hill Cumorah—and received answer by a "thus saith the Lord," should seek information like ordinary mortals, though the medium of correspondence, seemed to indicate not only a lack of courtesy, but a want of confidence in the inspiration with which he claimed to be endowed. He replied to Clay in a caustic and bitter letter—also written by Phelps—which was widely published in the democratic papers, and besides raising a general laugh at its ridiculousness, served to irritate a powerful party against the whole sect.

### ANOTHER CAUSE OF HATRED.

was the circulation of a large number of the worthless bills of the old Kirtland bank, an institution established in Ohio some ten years previous, by Joseph Smith, and which, having failed to receive a charter, went to pieces. Some speculator or enemy put quantities of them in circulation around Nauvoo, and their worthless character raised a hue and cry against the honesty of the Saints. Smith warned the people, in a notice in *The Nauvoo Neighbor*, against receiving the bills, as they were worthless, and claimed that they had never been circulated by him, but had been stolen from the vault by a mob that broke into the bank.

To the above-mentioned causes may also be added the apostasy, from the Saints, of Gen. John C. Bennett. This strange compound of folly and depravity had passed through a checkered business career in the east, and was at one time in Erie, Pa., carrying on the manufacture and sale of "compound tomato pills," which he claimed to be highly efficacious in removing "humors in the blood" and "obstructions of the liver," and the rival of calomel generally. Not finding his pill business sufficiently lucrative, through various revolutions the doctor found himself among the Mormons, in Nauvoo. Having considerable knowledge of mankind, and a good deal more of "the way a thing was to be done," he soon rendered himself very useful to the prophet by bringing to bear on the legislature influences that resulted in the incorporation of the city and the organization of the legion. In return, he was made mayor of the city, major general of the legion, and quartermaster general of the State. Joseph Smith received repeated "revelations" concerning Bennett and the assistance he was rendering the church; the Lord always adding, by way of prudent precaution against backsliding, "If my servant John continues faithful," then "thus saith the Lord."

### RUMORS HAVING GONE ABROAD

to the discredit of the church, that Joseph Smith taught stealing as a duty, on Nov. 9, 1844, the prophet personally appeared before Mayor Bennett and made oath that "he has never, directly or indirectly, encouraged the purloining of property, or taught the doctrine of stealing, and that all such unlawful acts and vile practices will receive his unqualified disapproval." This singular document is signed, "Joseph Smith, President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints."

As the Lord, who inspired the prophet, evidently supposed, His "servant John" did not remain faithful, but went out in a most

woeful apostasy, and a furious quarrel ensued that deepened the current of existing hatred towards the Saints. At the same time there dwelt among the Saints, and much of the time at Nauvoo, six or eight persons who were determined to bring to an end the career of that singular man, Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum. There were two brothers named Higbee, from Cincinnati, worthless and reckless fellows; two brothers named Foster, Englishmen by birth, who had come among the Saints and grown rich by speculation, and two other brothers named Wilson and William Law Canadian refugees, who had engaged in the revolutionary movement under McKenzies, and on the failure of that enterprise had fled to the States, and floated around in the west with the mere wreck of a large fortune which they had let in Canada. Wm. Law had made himself so popular with the Saints that at a conference held to provide against the possibility of the church being left without a prophet, he had been set apart, with several others, to succeed in the leadership, provided Joseph or Hyrum should die, or be assassinated, which they constantly feared. While still in the confidence of the church, he was, it is claimed, plotting for the abduction and assassination of Joseph. During the time of a great scarcity he had charge of a flouring mill, and ran the prices of breadstuffs up to oppressive figures. Against this speculation on the necessities of the poor, Joseph interposed, so far as his position would allow, and this only added to the current of ill-will already setting in strongly between them. Joined to these six men was another of more desperate make than any of them, named Jackson. He had led a wandering life, and at last came to Nauvoo, and for a time demeaned himself so as to gain the confidence of many, and to be on intimate terms with the prophet. Joseph Smith was not a suspicious man, but took a stranger for what he professed to be, although he had

### BEEEN BETRAYED AGAIN AND AGAIN

by almost every leading man in the church, who had, at one time and another, sought to use him and the church for their own private ends. Jackson was at length suspected of counterfeiting, and had laid his plans to obtain dies with which to manufacture notes of several popular banks. Meanwhile he had made proposals of marriage to the daughter of Hyrum Smith, and had been rejected and informed by her father that he was a wicked, unprincipled man, whom his daughter should never marry. Miss Smith was a lovely and accomplished girl, intellectual and well educated, and eventually married a respectable young merchant in the city. This and his rebuff enraged the ferocious vagabond so much that he threatened to abduct her and swore vengeance against her father. Jackson was a very tall, dark-skinned, black-eyed man, a daredevil at heart and a bankrupt in character, and scrupled at no means to compass the destruction of both father and daughter.

With all these men the Prophet came to be on bad terms, and the result was that they purchased a press and started an anti-Mormon paper called *The Expositor*, the first number of which contained a violent assault on Joseph, calculated to excite mob violence against him and the city of the Saints. The city council was convened in view of the danger, and, after consulting legal authority, declared the paper a nuisance. Accordingly the mayor issued an order for its abatement. To have arrested the publishers for libel would not have averted the danger of a mob, and to have arrested them at all would have been likely to provoke violence. The sitting of the council was long and trying, and the debates and statements of persons under oath showed clearly the painful apprehensions of all concerned. The horrors of Missouri were fresh in memory. The Fosters and their accomplices had been expelled from the church, and one of them had been proven guilty of abuse to females and reprimanded by Smith. The evidence that the whole six had been engaged in bogus money-making was deemed conclusive. Wilson Law had seduced an orphan girl and been exposed. William Law had offered Jackson \$500

### TO KILL THE PROPHET,

and Jackson had been proved a murderer before the city council,

and had threatened the lives of the Smiths. In compliance with the order of the mayor, Mr. Green, city marshal, with about a dozen men, went to the office of *The Expositor*, removed the press, tied the type in the street, destroyed the issue of the paper and a number of objectionable handbills, without noise or confusion, and returned the order to the mayor, with an indorsement setting forth their acts. A full account of the affair was given to the public through the columns of *The Nauvoo Neighbor*, the Mormon paper.

Dr. Richmond, in his narrative, says: "I have all these papers before me, and no one can fail to perceive that they believed that course to be the only one that could save the city from bloodshed and murder. They did what they believed to be legal, under their charter, and claimed the right to be tried within their city limits, repudiating the jurisdiction of the courts of the country."

The Higbees, Laws, and Fosters fled into the country and published the outrage to the world, grossly exaggerated, alleging that a mob of a thousand men had assembled, with yells and threats of death to all who hindered them, and had demolished the press, destroyed the building, and burned other property in the city belonging to the Fosters. On the other hand, at an investigation subsequently held, Dr. J. R. Wakefield, of New York, testified that the march to the office of the newspaper was "as orderly and solemn as the Dead March in 'Saul,'" that no violence was used toward anyone, and nothing but the press was disturbed.

While the discussion was going on concerning the destruction of the press, each party had sent a message to Gov. Ford with a statement of the case. Smith, a justice of the peace at Carthage, the county seat of Hancock county, had issued warrants for the arrest of the press-destroyers on a charge of riot. Some of them escaped through a writ of *habeas corpus* obtained from the municipal court of Nauvoo, and subsequently refused to be arrested for the same offense. *The Warsaw Signal*, of June 19, 1844, contained a mobocratic appeal to arms, declaring that Nauvoo had been declared under martial law by the prophet; that every able-bodied man in Warsaw was under arms; that an insulted and injured people were determined to redress their wrongs; that troops were promised from Missouri and Iowa, and 300 men were ready in Rushville; that the delegates sent to the governor had not yet returned, and if they failed to secure his interference, a day would be set forthwith for a general rally as a posse, to assist the officers of justice; that muskets had been received from Quincy, and men and arms were promised from St. Louis; that they were too weak in Hancock county to effect their object, and calling on everybody to come to their aid. "You will be doing your God and your country a service in aiding us to rid earth of a most heaven-daring wretch," said the incendiary sheet. Thus it will be seen that war was virtually declared, and death to the Mormons proclaimed before Gov. Ford arrived at Carthage, on June 21. On learning of the military preparations, Joseph Smith ordered the legion under arms, and in a speech declared the city under martial law. On this declaration was subsequently based.

### THE CHARGE OF HIGH TREASON,

on which he was arrested. In this same speech Joe declared that God had set up His standard on the earth, and the powers of the earth would bow before it. Nevertheless the moment the governor arrived the Mormon troops disbanded and matters were left to take their own course. The governor at first issued a proclamation declaring that both sides should be fairly heard. Afterward he issued another directed to the mayor and council of Nauvoo, in which he argued the case at length and decided every point against the Saints. He declared they had violated the constitution in interfering with the freedom of the press, in seizing property unlawfully, in usurping the power of a court in deciding that the press was a nuisance, etc.

After disbanding his troops, Joseph fled to Iowa, where he remained until he received the governor's letter, and then returned. Both Joseph and Hyrum were afraid of assassination, as their lives had frequently been threatened, and appealed to the governor for a guard, but their request was denied. Accordingly they started for Carthage alone, to surrender themselves. When about four miles out, they met Capt. Dunn, with an order for the state arms in the possession of the Saints, and faced about and returned with him to the city. It was at this juncture that Dr. Richmond reached the city. He says: "I was travelling in the west, and reached Nauvoo, June 24, and, with