

ELDER ORSON F. WHITNEY

It is just three years since I last stood before a congregation in a General Conference of the Church. Perhaps some of you would like to know how I have been spending the time. Bill Nye, the American humorist, was asked by a correspondent about his habits of life and methods of work—how he employed his time, and so forth. He answered: "I do most of my writing in a sitting posture or in an auto-graph album. I belong to an athletic club and a pair of Indian clubs. When I am not engaged in thought, I am employed in recovering from its effects." My case is somewhat similar, or at least that is suggestive of my case. I have been absent three years. Half of that time I was filling a mission in a foreign land. During the other half I have been "recovering from its effects." Not the effects of my mission, either; but the effects of illness, which put an end to my mission and made necessary my return much earlier than I had anticipated.

MISSION TO EUROPE

I left Salt Lake City, bound for Europe, on the 24th of May, 1921, and landed at Liverpool in the early days of June. My wife went with me, also a party of missionaries, including Elder William A. Morton, who was to assist me in the editorial department of the *Millennial Star*. I had been appointed to succeed Elder George Albert Smith as President of the European Mission, the affairs of which he turned over to me on the first day of July. Early that month, at a special convention of mission and conference presidents called for the purpose, I obtained further knowledge of the affairs of the Church in the British Islands and adjacent countries. I had previously visited, in company with President Smith, a few of the English conferences, and had been introduced by him to quite a number of prominent men, including journalists, police authorities, steamship magnates, a Welsh member of Parliament, the Lord Mayor of Liverpool, and the American and German consuls; so that when he sailed for home I had matters fairly well in hand.

PREACHING ON THE CONTINENT

Soon after his departure I made a tour of some of the Continental mission fields, accompanied by my wife and two of the Elders—Thomas M. Wheeler and Arthur H. Taylor, both choice men, the former the mission secretary. We passed through France, Switzerland, Germany, Belgium and Holland, attending conferences and holding special meetings in many of the principal cities. The Elders and Saints welcomed us joyfully, and large numbers of strangers flocked to hear what we had to say. Our largest gathering was in the Casino Music Hall, Berlin, where we addressed congregations, afternoon and evening, numbering twelve hundred and thirteen hundred people, about two-thirds of them non-members of the Church. They paid strict attention, only one interruption occurring, and that of a perfectly respect-

ful character. While I was speaking and my remarks were being interpreted "line upon line" by one of the German brethren, a young man arose in the body of the hall and politely requested the interpreter to speak less rapidly, as he wished to "get the points." Another auditor was the organist of the Kaiser's Church in Berlin; he attended our afternoon meeting, and volunteered an organ solo for the evening session. Everywhere we were treated with the greatest kindness and courtesy. Quite a change from the days when the Saints in Germany, in order to evade the police, had to meet secretly in small groups in private homes, with the blinds drawn; and when the Elders, if caught preaching anywhere in that country, were imprisoned or banished summarily. We found the work of the Lord prospering in that mission and in the Netherlands, under the efficient labors of Elders Serge F. Ballif and John P. Lillywhite, the presiding brethren, and their faithful helpers.

SCENES OF INTEREST

While in Paris we took an excursion to Rheims, where we viewed the shattered Cathedral, bombarded by German guns during the Great War; and thence, for several miles, traversed the famous "Hindenburg Line," passing through the remains of French villages desolated by the fearful strife. The scenic wonders of Switzerland, "the castled crags" and terraced vineyards of the Rhine, the famous field of Waterloo, and other objects of familiar interest to the tourist, I have not time to dwell upon. At Liege, in Belgium, we lunched at the home of the American consul, George M. Hanson of Ogden, Utah, and inspected, nine miles out, the ruins of Fort Loncin, whose heroic garrison made such a wonderful defense against the overwhelming Teutonic invasion of 1914. At Rotterdam, in Holland, I had the privilege of speaking from the pulpit of the little church where the Pilgrim Fathers held their farewell service, prior to embarking for America in 1620.

AGAIN IN BRITAIN

Having spent six weeks upon the Continent, we returned to England, landing at Harwich, and barely escaping the humiliation of being sent back to Holland to have our passports vised by the British consul, we having failed, through misinformation, to observe that formality. I had contracted a heavy cold in Holland, and for the next few days after my return to Liverpool, was disabled for active service. The fall and winter conferences of the British Mission—fourteen in number, held one week apart—were just beginning, the first one in Ireland, where things were in a turmoil, men being shot down every few minutes or so. I was kind-o'-glad I couldn't go, and Brother Morton was none too happy at being sent. But he went, and had a good time—there's always a good time where Brother Morton goes—and came back rejoicing; the return trip being particularly delightful. (Laughter.) The remainder of the conferences I was able to attend, and later I also visited the war-torn Emerald Isle.

AN ANTI-"MORMON" ATTACK

With the opening of the New Year, a fierce anti-"Mormon" onslaught began in many of the British newspapers; the "stunt press" they call it over there—the equivalent for "yellow journals" in America. Twenty-six of them were barking at us simultaneously all over the land. During the next three months our pens and tongues were kept busy refuting the slanders with which the country was flooded, and presenting the facts in relation to Utah and her people. The principal charge made against the Elders was that of inducing young women to go to Utah for polygamous purposes. The only "evidence" adduced in support of this charge was a quotation from one of our Articles of Faith—an adaptation of the well known words of St. Paul: "If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things." "These things," of course, were the British girls. The accusers of the brethren affected to regard this as a confession of guilt. Let me say here that the standing reward of two hundred pounds (\$1,000) offered years ago by Mr. V. S. Peet, for one case of a British girl lured to Utah by "Mormon" influence, is still unclaimed.

The intelligent classes were not deceived by the false reports spread abroad, many of which were so ridiculous as to carry with them their own refutation; but they were accepted as true by the ignorant inhabitants of the slums, stirred up in some instances by ministers of the churches. One of our most active assailants was a minister who had been a Texas cowboy, but having inherited an English baronetcy, had returned to his native land, and been made the pastor of a church in London. This reverend gentleman had the audacity and mendacity to say to his Sunday congregation: "I have seen with my own eyes the bloodstained boulder at the back of Smith's house, freshly stained with the blood of rebellious girl converts." Another of his lurid tales was to the effect that the "Mormon" men killed off their old wives by giving them a strong alkali drink which destroyed them gradually, thus making way for younger wives, recruited through the labors of the missionaries. Needless to say, alkali was not the only kind of lie used in his statement. The British Government's chief aliens inspector, by direction of the Home Secretary, applied to me for data regarding "Mormon" missionary and emigrational activities, and the same was promptly furnished. I then asked him: "Is the Home Office agitated over the present outcry against us?" Smilingly he answered: "Not at all; we understand; but we must be prepared, when pressure comes, to present the facts in reply." As for the papers and the "movies," they made money out of the agitation, which of course was their principal object. When requested to publish replies to the sensational canards, most of the editors or managers flatly refused. One of them said: "We are out to crush Mormonism at any cost."

All the Elders in the mission, and many of the Sisters, did splen-

did service in repelling this foul and unprovoked attack. Among its unpleasant results were the tarring and feathering of three Elders in Scotland, the smashing of the plate-glass windows of the London Conference house, and the temporary cessation of open-air meetings in some parts. But on the whole we were benefited by the assault; it awakened interest in our cause, made friends for us, increased baptisms, and enhanced the attendance at our meetings.

DUTIES OF MISSION PRESIDENT

My time was fully occupied in editing the *Star* (ably assisted by Brother Morton), in writing and publishing pamphlets setting forth our tenets and views, assigning and instructing missionaries, visiting the conferences, preaching wherever opportunity offered, and doing whatever else devolved upon the Mission President. I presented a handsome copy of the Book of Mormon to the Home Secretary, Mr. Shortt, and sent pamphlets and other literature to every member of Parliament and to all the leading men of Great Britain. I worked early and late, and as hard as my strength would permit—much of the time at a great disadvantage, owing to a physical ailment which had troubled me a long while, and for which, I am now convinced, I should have had an operation before leaving home. President Grant, who knew of it, had given me my choice, whether to go or not until such an operation was performed. I went without it, but after that strenuous year in the mission field, found that I could not safely put it off any longer.

IN THE HOSPITAL

Accordingly, after completing the round of the spring conferences in England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland, deferring (as I then thought temporarily) a visit to the Scandinavian countries, I went up to London, entered a private hospital or "nursing home," and underwent the operation contemplated. I had first-class surgical attendance, but for some reason the operation was not entirely successful, and had to be repeated; the result being that I was detained in the "Home" for a much longer period than I had counted upon. Thirty days was said to be the usual time, but I lay there for nearly fourteen weeks, physically helpless, yet with mental faculties equal to the task of furnishing editorial articles for the *Star*, and corresponding with the brethren here at home and with those whom I had left in charge at Liverpool. My faithful wife was with me through it all, lightening by her daily visits and tender ministrations my burden of affliction. Finally, I emerged from the hospital, and after a ten days' rest at the hospitable home of Brother Ralph J. Pugh, who with his amiable wife had been exceedingly kind and attentive, I went back to my post and resumed work—too soon, I found to my cost before many days had passed. I suffered a relapse, and became more helpless than ever.

RELEASE AND RETURN

Some weeks of misery went by and I then decided to come home, President Grant having given me an honorable release, with advice to return as soon as I could safely travel. On the 10th of November I sailed from Liverpool for Montreal, my wife and two Elders—Clyde Romney and Claude W. Hinckley—coming with me and caring for me all along the way. Never was invalid waited upon more faithfully. I could not have done without their help, especially during our unfortunate and unlooked for detention in quarantine on a bleak island in the St. Lawrence River, within a day's distance of Montreal. Two hundred and forty first-class passengers, housed in immigrant barracks on that frozen, wind-swept rock, Gros Island—such was the situation. A case of smallpox on board was the cause, and fourteen days was the regular period of detention in such cases. But this was shortened for us to eight days, through the interest taken by leading brethren in Utah, and the influence exerted by Senator Smoot with the Canadian authorities. We were all vaccinated, and as fast as the vaccinations "took," were allowed to proceed on our way. A few other Elders and Saints, with us on the island, were released at about the same time. Every courtesy was extended by Government and railroad officials, both in Canada and the United States, and although the journey was a very trying one, we reached home in safety, December 7, 1922.

GRADUAL CONVALESCENCE

Since then I have been slowly convalescing back to health. I was told by a medical doctor soon after my return, that it would be eighteen months before I would "feel fit." The eighteen months are up this spring, and my condition is now almost normal. During the winter I have read a great deal, have done some writing, and in the past few weeks have spoken fourteen times in public. A year ago or more, I could neither read nor write, nor even think clearly. There was a weight upon my brain like an iron clamp, while in walking I felt as if I were lifting great chunks of lead. As for public speaking, that was entirely out of the question. Since walking has always been my favorite exercise, and reading, writing and speaking the occupations in which I have taken most delight, you can judge of the amount of privation that my long sickness entailed. I can never be grateful enough to President Grant and other kind friends who have ministered to my needs in various ways during the saddest and loneliest period of my life. I am thankful for the many prayers offered up in my behalf—prayers that have been answered in a manner truly wonderful. I can only say: "It is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in my eyes."

THE SPEAKER'S TESTIMONY

Brethren and sisters: I testify in all solemnity that I know this to be the work of the Lord. I never knew it so well as I do now.

I have been just near enough to "the other side" to sense it most thoroughly, and my one desire is to live to bear testimony of the Truth. I do not testify that the Gospel is true; that would be superfluous—a mere truism. One might as well say that truth is true, or that white is white, as to say that the Gospel is true. Of course it's true, or it wouldn't be the Gospel, which is Truth itself. But I do testify that what is called "Mormonism" is the Gospel—the Everlasting Gospel; that Jesus Christ is the one and only Savior, and that Joseph Smith was and is his prophet, standing at the head of the last and greatest of the gospel dispensations, the mission of which is to gather together all things in Christ and prepare the way before His glorious second coming. I know that this work will go on conquering and to conquer—not with worldly but with spiritual weapons; that nothing can stand against it to impede its progress; and that it never will be smaller or weaker than it is today. Like the little snowball from the mountain-top, gathering as it goes, it will yet become a mighty avalanche, sweeping all evil before it, and fulfilling what the Prophet Daniel spoke concerning it. For it is "the stone cut out without hands" which is destined to grow into "a great mountain" and "fill the whole earth." God speed it on its way! Amen.

ELDER JOSEPH FIELDING SMITH

My brethren and sisters, I am sure that the people here assembled, and throughout the stakes of Zion, are rejoicing in the remarkable recovery that has come to Elder Orson F. Whitney. The hand of the Lord has been made manifest in his restoration to health.

This afternoon I need your faith and prayers to assist me in the remarks that I shall make.

WE STAND AS WITNESSES FOR CHRIST

We are living in perilous times, in a day when the mission of the Church is perhaps more pronounced, and our message to the world more clearly defined, than ever before. As a people we stand as witnesses for Christ in a day when the world has turned from him, when they are teaching the doctrines of men and discarding the fundamental truths of the Christian faith.

I have been reflecting, as I have listened to the remarks that were made this morning and this afternoon, and desire to present some of my thoughts, and some thoughts of others uttered by prophecy in ancient times, which are very important to us and which concern very seriously the world and the conditions therein. My thoughts dwelt upon this passage of scripture which was uttered by Nephi almost six hundred years before the birth of Christ, wherein he was speaking of the latter days:

TESTIMONY OF AN ANCIENT PROPHET

"O that cunning plan of the evil one! O the vainness, and the frailties, and the foolishness of men! When they are learned they think they are wise, and