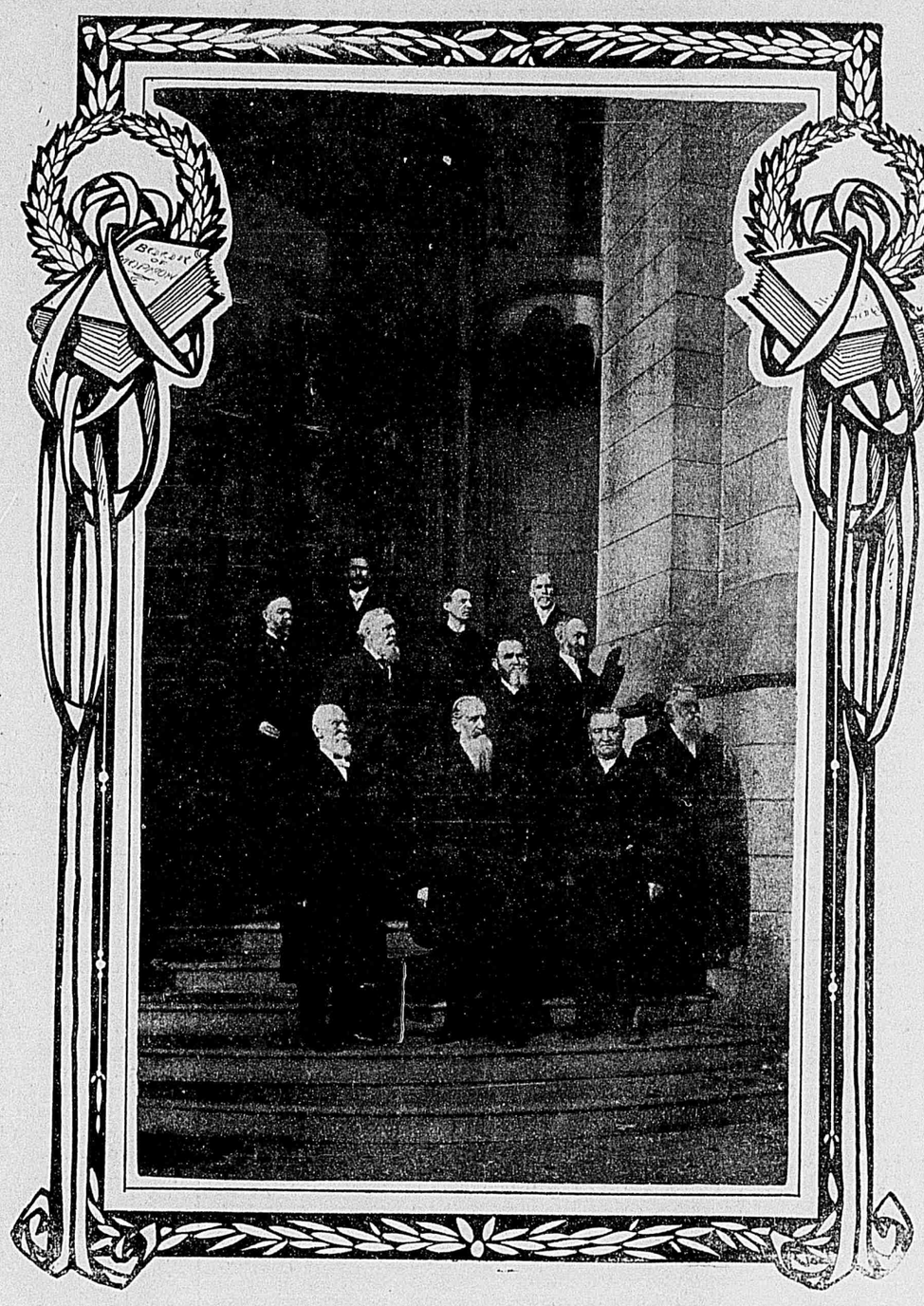
An Address to *The* Church by the First Presidency

As another year is drawing towards its close, agreeable to the custom that has prevailed for a number of years, we desire once more to say a few words to the Latter-day Saints by way of our usual Christmas greetings. We shall not attempt to enter into a discussion of the doctrines of the Church, or the principles of the Gospel, which have been so abundantly given to the people by the Apostles and Elders of the Church throughout Zion and the world. We see on every hand unmistakable evidences of the hand-dealings of the Lord with His people comprising the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and with all the people composing the great nation of which we are a part. Not only the people of Utah and adjoining states and territories, but the whole people of our country at large, have been remarkably blessed with a multitude of blessings throughout the year. Prosperity has prevailed in every part of the land, notwithstanding the financial flurry which for a time threatened serious consequences to the business of the country. The seasons have been propitious and the honest laborer has generally reaped abundant returns for his intelligent labors. The world at large has been free from the devastating effects of war, although it has not been altogether free from strife, and the smiles and approbation of the Lord have been shed abroad upon the face of the earth in a remarkable degree, and, we think, especially so in all parts of the world where effort is being made by His servants to lay the foundations of His work and spread the knowledge of truth and the coming and glory of His kingdom to the children of men. The tendency of the nations to submit their disputes and differences to boards of arbitration instead of deadly conflict on the battlefield, and the peace conferences that have been held in the past with more or less success, and will be continued in the future, are indeed very gratifying signs of the permanent establishment of peace and the cessation of war. We believe this hoped for condition among the nations is sure to come, that righteousness will prevail in every land and the word of the Lord will be proclaimed without fear or hindrance among all nations, tongues, and peoples.



GROUP OF CHURCH AUTHORITIES AT THE TEMPLE.

This interesting picture taken recently by C. R. Savage, shows a group made up of the First Presidency of the Church, the Patriarch and several members of the Quorum of the Twelve, who happened to be leaving the temple at the time.

Unfortunately the other members of the quorum were not present.

The personel of the group reading from left to right is as follows:

Lower Row—Presidents John R. Winder, Joseph F. Smith, Anthon H. Lund and Patriarch John Smith.

Next Row—Elders John Henry Smith, Frances M. Lyman and Heber J. Grant.

Next Row—Elders Geo. F. Richards, David McKay, Hyrum M. Smith and Anthony W. Ivins. The picture was taken at the main entrance to the temple on the east and the surroundings afford an excellent view of the massive and imposing architecture of the building.

THE LABORS OF THE ELDERS.

The Elders of the Church have labored zealously and faithfully to proclaim the message of life and salvation, both of a temporal and spiritual nature, in all of their mission fields, and have done much towards the establishment of truth and brotherly love; for the spirit of peace, justice, mercy and righteousness emanates from the Elders and spreads abroad upon the people among whom they labor. Their mission is one of well doing and love for their fellow-men. They carry unto the people the Gospel of Christ, which through obedience to its precepts will save and exalt them in His kingdom, that will eventually be established and have universal sway throughout the earth as the ancient prophets have foretold.

The demand for efficient laborers in the various mission fields has for a long time been far greater than we have been able to supply. However it has been our aim to keep sufficient Elders in the various nations where we have missions established to carry on the work of the Lord intelligently and successfully, that there may be no unnecessary delay in the spread of the Gospel among the people, for we realize that it is to be preached in power among all nations in this dispensation. We have at present Elders laboring in Europe, Asia, Africa and many of the islands of the sea as well as throughout the American hemisphere. Considering the great number of Elders that are kept constantly in the mission fields exceedingly few of them have proved themselves unworthy of the glorious mission to which they have been called, and a few have laid down their lives while thus laboring in the Master's cause. And while our hearts go out in sympathy to the bereaved kindred and families of those faithful Elders thus called home, we cannot but be thankful in the knowledge that there is awaiting them honor and reward akin to that of the martyrs for the cause of truth in all ages of the world. We rejoice in the precious assurance given in the Gospel that they and their kindred who remain faithful to the truth will come up together in the morning of the resurrection crowned with glory, immortality and everlasting life. The efficiency capability, earnestness and devotion to duty of those who have been called to the responsible positions of presiding over the various missions of the world have given us great joy. Not one of these has ever shrunk from any duty or failed to meet any requirement made of him in the faithful discharge of the duties of his presidency. The progress of the work of the Lord under their direction has been exceedingly gratifying and satisfactory.

TREATMENT OF THE ELDERS IN THE WORLD.

We are also happy to say upon reliable information that the Elders are receiving much more respectful treatment and consideration from the better and more enlightened classes of people. Prejudice is giving way before the spread of correct knowledge of the true character of the great latter-day work through the consistent and persistent efforts of the servants of the Lord; and such opposition as is now met with is generally from the ignorant and misguided classes of men who are blinded by the bigotry and hatred awakened in their hearts by those devoted to priestcraft and political chicanery. And while a determined effort has been made on the part of some bigoted and malicious souls to injure the cause of Zion and retard the spread of the message of truth among the honest minded people of the world, we are pleased to say that their determination to do injury has been overruled by divine Providence and has resulted in good, and their influence today is comparatively impotent and their attacks are without the results that followed such attacks in days that are past.

HEADQUARTERS OF MISSIONS.

This year the Church has expended considerable means in securing and fitting up permanent headquarters in the missions and conferences of the Church abroad. Some of these are fine structures and well suited for the purposes of meetings and homes for the Elders. We find that our possessing meeting-halls and headquarters gives us greater respect among our outside friends and encourages our Saints to make greater exertion to bring their friends to our meetings. It gives them confidence in the solidity of the work and makes it easier for them to follow the instructions given them by the Elders not to be in a hurry to emigrate, but for the Saints to remain and help strengthen the branches where they live and they themselves become more strongly grounded in the gospel.

USE OF THE BOOK OF MORMON IN MISSION FIELDS.

Many thousands of copies of the Book of Mormon have been published in the United States and have been widely distributed by the Elders among the people. The result has been an awakening of a lively interest in the doctrines of the gospel and in the divine mission of Joseph Smith. The Book of Mormon has been placed on sale in some of the largest and most reliable publishing and business houses in the United States, and it has been listed in their catalogues. The use of the Book of Mormon as a means of spreading the gospel has proved to be very successful. We feel to commend the Elders for their efforts in this direction and pray that this work may be continued by them in the future both at home and in foreign fields with equal diligence and good results. The general use of the Book of Mormon by the Elders as a means of spreading a knowledge of the gospel and in converting men to the divinity of the mission of the Prophet Joseph Smith is certain to be followed with gratifying results. The book contains a promise to all honest investigators that they shall know of its truth if they will study it with prayerful hearts. Hundreds testify to the fulfilment of this promise. This use of the Book of Mormon is merely a return to conditions that prevailed in the early days of the Church when the Elders went forth with the Book of Mormon and many believed and were baptized. Some of the first and staunchest members were converted through reading the Book of Mormon. Among these might be mentioned Presidents Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball, Willard Richards, Parley P. Pratt and Orson Pratt, George A. Smith and other members of the Prophet's household, and many others that space will not permit us to mention.

The Elders of the Church are the witnesses for Christ in the world that He has again established His Gospel, and the world will be judged by their testimonies. The Book of Mormon is a witness of the dealings of God with the ancient inhabitants of this land, which is the land of Zion. It contains the gospel of Jesus Christ and has been translated by the gift and power of God as a means for the salvation and redemption of His children.

THE WORK IN THE STAKES OF ZION.

What we have said of the integrity and devotion to the cause by those who have been called to preside in the missions, we can say with equal force and truth of those who have been called to preside in the several stakes of Zion. They are generally laboring with power and zeal among the Saints, uniting their hearts with a love unfeigned. The integrity of the Saints to the cause of Zion; their fidelity to the principles of the Gospel; their knowledge of the latter-day work; their fellowship for one another and for the presiding authorities of the Church, and the marked unity pervading all their assemblies, are highly commendable. Their observance of the principle of tithing which was revealed and established by our Heavenly Father to provide for the temporal needs of the Church, and their improvement in the observance of the Word of Wisdom and the principles of temperance and sobriety, marks their growth and advancement in the knowledge and love of the principles of their religion. Incidents of the recent past have proved the willingness of the Latter-day Saints, who are in full fellowship with the Church, to forego their personal desires and yield their individual preferences on their own volition for the public good, and mark distinctively their individual growth and broadening in the scale of intelligence as well as their integrity to the best interests of the whole.

THE CHURCH SCHOOLS.

Our Church schools throughout Zion, which now number 27 and have an enrollment of about 10,000 students, have continued to prosper. Some new and elegant buildings have been erected and others are in course of construction to make room for the increasing attendance. We only regret that the means necessary to meet all the requirements are not equal to the growth and demands of the schools. We feel it incumbent upon us, and a duty that is paramount to all other duties in our schools, to teach the youth of Zion love for truth, virtue, honor and purity of life, veneration for the name of the deity, the Church and all sacred things, proper respect for the Priesthood, not forgetting anything essential to a thorough moral and intellectual education. We are impressed that in comparison with these principles and an abiding faith in the Gospel all other things count but little in the education of the youth. Let these things be stamped upon the minds of the youth until they sink deep into their souls and become a portion of their very being. We have endeavored to establish our schools on a firm basis, and to have them equipped with the most thorough instructors and supplied with all necessary apparatus for imparting knowledge. They have been raised to a high standard of efficiency in all elementary branches and in some of them the higher branches of education are taught. We commend our Church schools to the Latter-day Saints and desire that they will continue to give to them their hearty and well deserved support, that they may continue to prosper and maintain their efficiency.

THE TEMPLE WORK.

Great activity has been manifest during the year 1908, on the part of the Saints in their Temple work. The spirit to work for the redemption of the dead is resting upon them and an increased interest has been shown in this work of divine love. This work is, the Prophet Joseph tells us, "essential to our salvation, as Paul says concerning the fathers, 'that they without us cannot be made perfect, neither can we without our dead be made perfect.'" The command of God is for the Saints to labor with their might for the redemption of their dead, for, as the Prophet says: "It is the greatest responsibility that God has laid upon us, to seek after our dead."

Many of the Saints have taken advantage of the opportunities afforded them by the Church in providing a Genealogical society where assistance can be given them in this important work. Records are being gathered and information of a genealogical nature is being accumulated for the use of the Saints. The spirit which moves the Saints to work for the redemption of the dead is the planting in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers. This same spirit seems to be moving upon the hearts of honorable men of the earth who are spending their time and means in collecting and compiling genealogical records. In Great Britain, and portions of the United States, societies have been organized for the gathering and preservation of genealogies. Vital records and parish registers that have been inaccessible are now being sought for and published in great numbers. It is desirable to obtain as many of these as possible and have them filed away. The Saints should take advantage of every opportunity to obtain the records as far as possible of their ancestors that their redemption through the ordinances of the house of God might be obtained. We commend the Saints for their diligence in this most important and essential work.

We wish the Saints a pleasant Christmas and that the new year may bring them much joy and happiness. We pray that the work of God may prosper at home and abroad, that the Saints may grow in the knowledge and grace of God and that the good and honest-hearted people everywhere may hear and understand the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

JOSEPH F. SMITH,
JOHN R. WINDER,
ANTHON H. LUND,
First Presidency.

CHRISTMAS GUEST--PRIZE CHRISTMAS STORY

(Continued from page four.)

he know rest till it fell into my loving hands. But enough for tonight, mother, dear, go to bed and don't fear. All is well with your Elsie.'

"Naturally I went to bed with the creeps," said Grandma, with her characteristic directness, "nor did I sleep a wink the livelong night. There is not much more to tell, just the end," and Grandma's crisp tone changed. "Just the end," she repeated, as loath to believe it.

"Elsie's child was born in the soft Christmas gloaming, and in that moment when she felt for the first time, the blessed breath of her first born, her own was gently drawn from her lips.

"'My little bud,' she murmured softly, 'thou wilt blossom here.' Then to me with her own rare smile, 'just into another room, dear mother, that is all. I've known it all along. The gentle weaver waits for me. I am that love among his roses woven—I am his soul companion. Call my baby, 'Thauma.' We will guard you both—this is the hour of the Persian greeting—Peace be unto thee—good night.'"

"Why," said Grandma resentfully, "the traits of the husband should have tinctured that fair child, is one of Fate's riddles. Beautiful—and winning? Aye, who knows it better than I—whom she's wheedled out of reason these many years? Sweethearted, too, for all the blight of her father's rebellious blood. But you see her as she has been and will be, save for a miracle—scornful of faith, and all life's highest duties. 'But 'tis the blood, and not the heart in her that's bitter. Make up your mind to that, John, and fare the best you can."

John walked the floor in thought, darkened with intimate remembrances; and the other watching him, heaved grievous sighs.

"Send me a turkey," ordered Grandma, "chuck full of pin feathers."

Out of hearing, the grocer remarked, "The old lady's childish."

"I don't know of anything more distracting than pin feathers," she said to herself. "If I don't keep myself busy I'm bound to go mad. I'm not going to leave one loop for the evil eye to peep through. I'll do nothing today but puddings, and after that cakes. Then I shall fill all my jars with cranberry jelly, and after that candy; and when this is all done, well, I'll just begin over again. I've got to work off the effects of that mystical rug, with its salient voice."

"What's that you're saying, Grandma?" John stood in the kitchen.

"I've a raisin seed in my eye, that's what I'm saying. How's Thauma?"

"Happy as can be, but—mother, I'm worried." And John thrust his hands in his pockets.

"Sit down and stone a few raisins; best thing I know to work off a spell of the worries, or Willies—I care not the name, so it's offset—and these raisins are that sticky—I bought 'em on purpose—they'll absorb your mind, body and soul, and that's what I'm after——"

"But Grandma, now tell me, how did she know——"

"How do I know?" the old lady anticipated with usual keenness. "I tell you the key to that box was fast in my old chest of drawers, and is now; nor looks as if it had ever been touched. Why the thing's rusty, and actually lies in an old spider web, and the spider's there, too, dead beside it."

"But how did she know in the first place of the rug's existence, its history, its hiding place, and that, rightfully, she should have had it last Christmas, being the first since her marriage, and all of which she has but finished telling me?"

"What says the nurse, John?" Grandma evaded his questions. "She strikes me as being a creature assuming a sort of superior and scientific intelligence."

John could not refrain a smile, even in the midst of his overwhelming anxiety.

"Nerves," he answered.

"Nerves!" with contempt.

"Much she knows about the case. Does she think for an instant that such flimsy things as nerves opened my old strong box? A nerve would be about as much use in acting the part of a skeleton key as—a pin feather."

"I tell you, John Calvin, that nurse knows nothing about this case. And I tell you that that dear child upstairs is marked, both in looks and with that strange power called, in my day, second sight."

"John walked the floor in a crazed sort of way.

"Go up and see her," he said. "Perhaps you may find her not just the same as her mother." There was hope in his tone.

So at twilight Grandma slipped into that sweet wifely presence, but her heart almost stood still, for two soft arms stole about her neck the same as two arms in the past; while a fresh happy voice stealing out of the gloaming gave greeting:

"Peace be unto thee, dear Grandma, and thank you; the rug's all I needed to quiet me. I know, Grammy, why you withheld it—you feared its strange spell—but really, its both meat and drink to me now, and it comforts me like my sweet mother."

"How found you the key, my sweet lambie?"

"I needed no key. The box opened the minute I touched it; and I hauled out the rug, spread it down, and something said, 'Take it down to your room and all will be well, my Thauma.'"

"But you did not take it, my dearie."

"No; the same thing came again and said softly, 'not thou, dear; but Grandma.' 'Twas the sweet voice of mother," said Thauma.

It was too much. Grandma fled from the room on the pretext that her puddings were all boiling dry; but instead of going direct to the kitchen, she caught a shawl from the hall-tree and was making for the door, when John stopped her.

"Where are you going, Grandma?"

"Mad, if I don't get some air. The child's room is too warm."

"Wait; I'll go with you." John reached for his hat. "Now, mother, don't think to deceive me. I must be prepared and know all."

"My Elsie, exactly."

John groaned.

"All is lost if she keeps that way. For about that lies the charm by which she will not only hear voices, but see things. Now listen to me, John Calvin, it's me for the breaking of that spell. I'm not going to stand by like some dumb driven thing and see that child's life drawn away as was her mother's. To date, the cases are parallel. See to it that I'm given the chance to put away that rug forever."

"Take me in the sleigh," Thauma said next morning. "I want to see the hills, and the valleys, and all my old haunts before I'm shut in," which speech struck terror to the hearts of all. "And my locket, nurse," she added, which she clasped about her throat as the sleigh slipped through the snow.

"God love her and spare her," said Grandma, as down upon her knees she fell with a vicious snatch at the rug.

Christmas eve found Grandma pacing the floor, and moaning from time to time, as memory tapped at her heart, and brought back the past with its pain, and its loss. Nor would it allow her to close her eyes when into her old arm chair she finally sank. Close vigil it kept with her the whole night through, till at length nervous and exhausted the tears coursed down her pale, wrinkled cheeks and she wailed hopelessly: "Nothing to me will be left but memory."

The night waned. The sun had chased the shadows, and was smiling triumphantly over the hills, as swiftly down the stairs swept John, pressing that silvery sorrowing head to his breast, and shutting out forever, by the wild tumult of his heart and the joyous ring of his voice, memory's ear.

"A male-child! Glory to God!" Grandma was unconscious of incompliment to her spirit. May such be the sex to the end of our future generation."

In the quiet of the Christmas dusk, when with the light step of a girl, Grandma slipped into that holy chamber, a soft and love-laden voice stole out from the covers:

"Peace be unto thee, Grandma dear, and will you bring me my baby? How dear he is—and oh, how heedless I have been of the great joy of his coming. It is the wonderful rug, Granny, dear—with its voice, the voice that speaks through the emblem. I know what my mother meant, now, by the Christmas Guest—it is there in threads of gold—the cross, the Christ.'"