

AN OLIVE LEAF

"... plucked from the Tree of Paradise, the Lord's message of peace to us."
(See History of the Church 1:316 and D&C 88.)

THE MISSION OF SAVING GRAIN

By Emmeline B. Wells

From remarks by Relief Society General President Emmeline B. Wells, at the Relief Society Conference, 30 October 1914, published in the Relief Society Magazine, February 1915, 47–48. The grain that the Society gathered was sold to the government during World War I.

AT THIS PRESENT TIME . . . it seems necessary to talk about temporal wants, including the saving of grain. . . . First of all, I want to say that when I was quite a young woman, I was at one time very ill, and Sister Eliza R. Snow came to me. With me was Mother Elizabeth Ann Whitney, who, in connection with another sister, helped to prepare the first woman in the Relief Society for burial, and who was counselor to Emma Smith in the presidency of the society. . . . Sister Eliza was secretary of the first society; and when she administered to me, she gave me a blessing which I wrote down at the time, and she said: "You will live to do a work that has never been done by any woman, since the Creation." These were her words.

Well, one day toward the end of September 1876, President Young sent for me to come over to his office. . . . When I went over, the president said: "I want to give you a mission; and it is to save grain. The brethren tell me, that the sisters want them to sell the grain to buy bonnets and other finery." In those days we did not wear so many hats, you know, nor silk dresses, silk ribbons, and the like.

President Young continued: "I want the sisters to save the grain, and I want to give you a mission. I want you to begin by writing the strongest editorial that you can possibly write upon this subject." I . . . went first to Sister Eliza R. Snow; and she said she couldn't help me,—it was given to me to do. Finally President [Daniel H.] Wells [then second counselor to Brigham Young] consented that after I wrote the editorial, he would look over it. And this is the way the grain movement started among the Relief Societies.

We began that very year, and though we were laughed at, we did buy grain,—the Relief Society did; I did not do it myself—the Relief Society gave money, and grain was bought that



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year, and stored in President Wells' barn. . . . We had quite a quantity stored that year; and the sisters also began in the several stakes of Zion that had begun to be organized . . . and that work has been kept up until the present time. Yet we have been ridiculed more over this than over any other one thing in the Relief Society.

I think that you can all realize that President Young had the gift of prophecy, that he knew what he was doing. . . . Further than that, whether or not it was known to him, it was known to the Lord that I would live to the old age I have. At any rate, I have lived to this day to tell you this story about the beginning of the saving of grain, and to counsel you to be diligent this year, not only in saving of wheat, but in the saving of everything else that can be saved and preserved in the way of provisions. I think we all have ribbons enough, may be, to last us for a little while, and scarfs enough, and while perhaps we have not all kinds of clothing enough, we have a "good deal," and we can all do something more for the saving of grain if we do a little less of some other things. For we are not only to save grain, but we are to save everything else that can be kept for a time of need, and take good care of it, and get the best advice we can to help us to do it. . . . I think you should have some expert help in buying the grain, because, in the first editorial on the subject, published in the *Woman's Exponent*, in October, 1876, appears a paragraph which President Young dictated to be added. . . [H]e says: "The brethren are to assist the sisters in this work, both in gathering and preserving the grain," meaning places to put it. I think that he even said, "In building granaries." Now, whether this was the peculiar mission to which Sister Eliza referred in blessing me—that I should live to do a work that had never been done by any woman since the Creation—I may leave you to say.

In any event, the work that has been done in the saving of grain is unusual and unique for women. Joseph in Egypt was the only one that saved and stored grain for a great people. So it may be said that Sister Eliza's prophecy has come to pass, as have many other prophecies that she uttered.