

[MORMON STUDIES](#) PRESENTS:

THE STORY OF THE MORMONS

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BOOK V

THE MIGRATION TO UTAH

CHAPTER I

PREPARATIONS FOR THE LONG MARCH

TWO things may be accepted as facts with regard to the migration of the Mormons westward from Illinois: first, that they would not have moved had they not been compelled to; and second, that they did not know definitely where they were going when they started. Although Joseph Smith showed an uncertainty of his position by his instruction that the Twelve should look for a place in California or Oregon to which his people might move, he considered this removal so remote a possibility that he was at the same time beginning his campaign for the presidency of the United States. As late as the spring of 1845, removal was considered by the leaders as only an alternative. In April, Brigham Young, Willard Richards, the two Pratts, and others issued an address to President Polk, which was sent to the governors of all the states but Illinois and Missouri, setting forth their previous trials, and containing this declaration: --

"In the name of Israel's God, and by virtue of multiplied ties of country and kindred, we ask your friendly interposition in our favor. Will it be too much for us to ask you to convene a special session of Congress and furnish us an asylum where we can enjoy our rights of conscience and religion unmolested? Or will you, in special message to that body when convened, recommend a remonstrance against such unhallowed acts of oppression and expatriation as this people have continued to receive from the states of Missouri and Illinois? Or will you favor us by your personal influence and by your official rank? Or will you express your views concerning what is called the Great Western Measure of colonizing the Latter-Day Saints in Oregon, the Northwestern Territory, or some location remote from the states, where the hand of oppression will not crush every noble principle and extinguish every patriotic feeling?"

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After the publication of the correspondence between the Hardin commission and the Mormon authorities, Orson Pratt issued an appeal "to American citizens," in which, referring to what he called the

proposed "banishment" of the Mormons, he said: "Ye fathers of the Revolution! Ye patriots of '76! Is it for this ye toiled and suffered and bled?... Must they be driven from this renowned republic to seek an asylum among other nations, or wander as hopeless exiles among the red men of the western wilds? Americans, will ye suffer this? Editors, will ye not speak? Fellow-citizens, will ye not awake?"¹

Their destination could not have been determined in advance, because so little was known of the Far West. The territory now embraced in the boundaries of California and Utah was then under Mexican government, and "California" was, in common use, a name covering the Pacific coast and a stretch of land extending indefinitely eastward. Oregon had been heard of a good deal, and it, as well as Vancouver Island, had been spoken of as a possible goal if a westward migration became necessary. Lorenzo Snow, in describing the westward start, said: "On the first of March, the ground covered with snow, we broke encampment about noon, and soon nearly four hundred wagons were moving to -- *we knew not where*."²

The first step taken by the Mormon authorities to explain the removal to their people was an explanation made at a conference in the new Temple, three days after the correspondence with the commission closed. P. P. Pratt stated to the conference that the removal meant that the Lord designed to lead them to a wider field of action, where no one could say that they crowded their neighbors. In such a place they could, in five years, become richer than they then were, and could build a bigger and a better Temple. "It has cost us," said he, "more for sickness, defence against mob exactions, persecutions, and to purchase lands in this place, than as much improvement will cost in another." It was then voted unanimously that the Saints would move *en masse* to the West, and that every man would give all the help he could to assist the poorer members of the community in making the journey.³

¹ *Millennial Star*, Vol. VI, p. 193.

² "Biography of Lorenzo Snow," p. 86.

³ *Millennial Star*, Vol. VI, p. 196. Wilford Woodruff, in an appeal to the Saints in Great Britain, asked them to buy Mormon books in order to assist the Presidency with funds with which to take the poor Saints with them westward.

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Brigham Young next issued an address to the church at large, stating that even the Mormon Bible had foretold what might be the conduct of the American nation toward "the Israel of the last days," and urging all to prepare to make the journey. A conference of Mormons in New York City on November 12, 1845, attended by brethren from New York State, New Jersey, and Connecticut, voted that "the church in this city move, one and all, west of the Rocky Mountains between this and next season, either by land or by water."

Active preparations for the removal began in and around Nauvoo at once. All who had property began trading it for articles that would be needed on the journey. Real estate was traded or sold for what it would bring, and the *Eagle* was full of advertisements of property to sell, including the Mansion House, Masonic Hall, and the Armory. The Mormons would load in wagons what furniture they could not take West with them, and trade it in the neighborhood for things more useful. The church authorities advertised for one thousand yokes of oxen and all the cattle and mules that might be offered, oxen bringing from \$40 to \$50 a yoke. The necessary outfit for a family of five was calculated to be one wagon, three yokes of cattle, two cows, two beef cattle, three sheep, one thousand pounds of flour, twenty pounds of sugar, a tent and bedding, seeds, farming tools, and a rifle -- all estimated to cost about \$250. Three or four hundred Mormons were sent to more distant points in Illinois and Iowa for draft animals, and, when the Western procession started, they boasted that they owned the best cattle and horses in the country.

In the city the men were organized into companies, each of which included such workmen as wagon-makers, blacksmiths, and carpenters, and the task of making wagons, tents, etc., was hurried to the utmost. "Nauvoo was constituted into one great wagon shop," wrote John Taylor. If any members of the community were not skilled in the work now in demand, they were sent to St. Louis, Galena, Burlington, or some other of the larger towns, to find profitable employment during the winter, and thus add to the moving fund.

On January 20, 1846, the High Council issued a circular announcing that, early in March, a company of hardy young men, with some families, would be sent into the Western country, with

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farming utensils and seed, to put in a crop and erect houses for others who would follow as soon as the grass was high enough for pasture.

This circular contained also the following declaration: --

"We venture to say that our brethren have made no counterfeit money; and if any miller has received \$1500 base coin in a week from us, let him testify. If any land agent of the general government has received wagon loads of base coin from us in payment for lands, let him say so. Or if he has received any at all, let him tell it. These witnesses against us have spun a long yarn."

This referred to the charges of counterfeiting, which had resulted in the indictment of some of the Twelve at Springfield, and which hastened the first departures across the river. That counterfeiting was common in the Western country at that time is a matter of history, and the Mormons themselves had accused such leading members of their church as Cowdery of being engaged in the business. The persons indicted at Springfield were never tried, so that the question of their guilt cannot be decided. Tullidge's pro-Mormon "Life of Brigham Young" mentions an incident which occurred when the refugees had gone only as far as the Chariton River in Iowa, which both admits that they had counterfeit money among them, and shows the mild view which a Bishop of the church took of the offence of passing it: --

"About this time also an attempt was made to pass counterfeit money. It was the case of a young man who bought from a Mr. Cochran a yoke of oxen, a cow and a chain for \$50. Bishop Miller wrote to Brigham to excuse the young man, but to help Cochran to restitution. The President was roused to great anger, the Bishop was severely rebuked, and the anathemas of the leader from that time were thundered against thieves and 'bogus men,' and passers of bogus money The following is a minute of his diary of a council on the next Sunday, with the twelve bishops and captains: "I told them I was satisfied the course we were taking would prove to be the salvation, not only of the camp but of the Saints left behind. But there had been things done which were wrong. Some pleaded our sufferings from persecution, and the loss of our homes and property, as a justification for retaliating on our enemies; but such a course tends to destroy the Kingdom of God."

As soon as the leaders decided to make a start, they sent a petition to the governor of Iowa Territory, explaining their intention to pass through that domain, and asking for his protection during the temporary stay they might make there. No opposition to them seems to have been shown by the Iowans, who on the contrary

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employed them as laborers, sold them such goods as they could pay for, and invited their musicians to give concerts at the resting points. Lee's experience in Iowa confirmed him, he says, in his previous opinion that much of the Mormons' trouble was due to "wild, ignorant fanatics;" "for," he adds, "only a few years before, these same people were our most bitter enemies, and, when we came again and behaved ourselves, they treated us with the utmost kindness and hospitality."¹

How much property the Mormons sacrificed in Illinois cannot be ascertained with accuracy. An investigation of all the testimony obtainable on the subject leads to the conclusion that a good deal of their real estate was disposed of at a fair price, and that there were many cases of severe individual loss. Major Warren, in a communication to the *Signal* from Nauvoo, in May, 1846, said that few of the Mormons' farms remained unsold, and that three-fourths of the improved property on the flat in Nauvoo had been disposed of.

A correspondent of the *Signal*, answering on April 11 an assertion that the Mormons had a good deal of real estate to dispose of before they could leave, replied that most of their farms were sold, and that there were more inquiries after the others than there were farms. As to the real estate in the city, he explained: --"It is scattered over an area of eight or ten square miles, and contains from 1500 to 2000 houses, four-fifths of which, at least, are wretched cabins of no permanent value whatever. There are, however, 200 or 300 houses, large and small, built of brick and other desirable material. Such will mostly sell, though many of them, owing to the distance from the river and other unfavorable circumstances, only at a very great sacrifice."²

A general epistle to the church from the Twelve, dated Winter

Quarters, December 23, 1847, stated that the property of the Saints in Hancock County was "little or no better than confiscated."³

¹ "Mormonism Unveiled," p. 179.

² "A score or more of chimneys on the northern boundary of the city marked the site of houses deliberately burned for fuel during the winter of 1845-1846." -- *Hancock Eagle*, May 29, 1846.

³ See John Taylor's address, p. 411 post.

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CHAPTER II

FROM THE MISSISSIPPI TO THE MISSOURI

THE first party to leave Nauvoo began crossing the Mississippi early in February, 1846, using flatboats propelled by oars for the wagons and animals, and small boats for persons and the lighter baggage. It soon became colder and snow fell, and after the 16th those who remained were able to cross on the ice.

Brigham Young, with a few attendants, had crossed on February 10, and selected a point on Sugar Creek as a gathering place.¹ He seems to have returned secretly to the city for a few days to arrange for the departure of his family, and Lee says that he did not have teams enough at that time for their conveyance, adding, "such as were in danger of being arrested were helped away first." John Taylor says that those who crossed the river in February included the Twelve, the High Council, and about four hundred families.²

"Camp of Israel" was the name adopted for the camp in which President Young and the Twelve might be, and this name moved westward with them. The camp on Sugar Creek was the first of these, and there, on

February 17, Young addressed the company from a wagon. He outlined the journey before them, declaring that order would be preserved, and that all who wished to live in peace when the actual march began "must toe the mark," ending with a call for a show of hands by those who wanted to make the move. The vote in favor of going West was unanimous.³

¹ "Mormonism Unveiled," p. 171.

² "February 14 I crossed the river with my family and teams, and encamped not far from the Sugar Creek encampment, taking possession of a vacant log house on account of the extreme cold." -- P. P. Pratt, "Autobiography," p. 378."

³ "At a Council in Nauvoo of the men who were to act as the captains of the people in that famous exodus, one after the other brought up difficulties in their path, until the prospect was without one poor speck of daylight. The good nature of George A. Smith was provoked at last, when he sprang up and observed, with his quaint humor, that had now a touch of the grand in it, 'If there is no God in Israel we are a sucked-in set of fellows. But I am going to take my family and the Lord will open the way.'" -- Tullidge, "History of Salt Lake City," p. 17.

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The turning out of doors in midwinter of so many persons of all ages and both sexes, accustomed to the shelter of comfortable homes, entailed much suffering. A covered wagon or a tent is a poor protection from wintry blasts, and a camp fire in the open air, even with a bright sky overhead, is a poor substitute for a stove. Their first move, therefore, gave the emigrants a taste of the trials they were to endure. While they were at Sugar Creek the thermometer dropped to 20 degrees below zero, and heavy falls of snow occurred. Several children were born at this point, before the actual Western journey began, and the sick and the feeble entered upon their sufferings at once. Before that camp broke up it was found necessary, too, to buy grain for the animals.

The camp was directly in charge of the Twelve until the Chariton River was reached. There, on March 27, it was divided into companies containing from 50 to 60 wagons, the companies being put in charge of captains of fifties and captains of tens -- suggesting Smith's "Army of Zion." The captains of fifties were responsible directly to the High

Council. There were also a commissary general, and, for each fifty, a contracting commissary "to make righteous distribution of grains and provisions." Strict order was maintained by day while the column was in motion, and, whenever there was a halt, special care was taken to secure the cattle and the horses, while at night watches were constantly maintained. The story of the march to the Missouri does not contain a mention of any hostile meeting with Indians.

The company remained on Sugar Creek for about a month, receiving constant accessions from across the river, and on the first of March the real westward movement began. The first objective point was Council Bluffs, Iowa, on the Missouri River, about 400 miles distant; but on the way several camps were established, at which some of the emigrants stopped to plant seeds and make other arrangements for the comfort of those who were to follow. The first of these camps was located at Richardson's Point in Lee County, Iowa, 55 miles from Nauvoo; the next on Chariton River; the next on Locust Creek; the next, named by them Garden Grove, on a branch of Grand River, some 150 miles from Nauvoo; and another, which P. P. Pratt named Mt. Pisgah, on Grand River, 138 miles east of Council Bluffs. The camp on the Missouri first made was called Winter Quarters, and was situated just north of the

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present site of Omaha, where the town now called Florence is located. It was not until July that the main body arrived at Council Bluffs.

The story of this march is a remarkable one in many ways. Begun in winter, with the ground soon covered with snow, the travellers encountered arctic weather, with the inconveniences of ice, rain, and mud, until May. After a snowfall they would have to scrape the ground when they had selected a place for pitching the tents. After a rain, or one of the occasional thaws, the country (there were no regular roads) would be practically impassable for teams, and they would have to remain in camp until the water disappeared, and the soil would bear the weight of the wagons after it was corduroyed with branches of trees. At one time bad roads caused a halt of two or three weeks. Fuel was not always abundant, and after a cold night it was no unusual thing to find

wet garments and bedding frozen stiff in the morning. Here is an extract from Orson Pratt's diary: --

"April 9. The rain poured down in torrents. With great exertion a part of the camp were enabled to get about six miles, while others were stuck fast in the deep mud. We encamped at a point of timber about sunset, after being drenched several hours in rain. We were obliged to cut brush and limbs of trees, and throw them upon the ground in our tents, to keep our beds from sinking in the mud. Our animals were turned loose to look out for themselves; the bark and limbs of trees were their principal food."¹

Game was plenty, -- deer, wild turkeys, and prairie hens, -- but while the members of this party were better supplied with provisions than their followers, there was no surplus among them, and by April many families were really destitute of food. Eliza Snow mentions that her brother Lorenzo -- one of the captains of tens -- had two wagons, a small tent, a cow, and a scanty supply of provisions and clothing, and that "he was much better off than some of our neighbors." Heber C. Kimball, one of the Twelve, says of the situation of his family, that he had the ague, and his wife was in bed with it, with two children, one a few days old, lying by her, and the oldest child well enough to do any household work was a boy who could scarcely carry a two-quart pail of water. Mrs. F. D. Richards, whose husband was ordered on a mission to England while the camp was at Sugar Creek, was prematurely

¹ *Millennial Star*, Vol. XI, p. 370.

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confined in a wagon on the way to the Missouri. The babe died, as did an older daughter. "Our situation," she says, "was pitiable; I had not suitable food for myself or my child; the severe rain prevented our having any fire." The adaptability of the American pioneer to his circumstances was shown during this march in many ways. When a halt occurred, a shoemaker might be seen looking for a stone to serve as a lapstone in his repair work, or a gunsmith mending a rifle, or a weaver at a wheel or loom. The women learned that the jolting wagons would churn their milk, and, when a halt occurred, it took them but a short time to heat an oven hollowed out of a hillside, in which to bake the bread already "raised." Colonel Kane says that he saw a piece of cloth,

the wool for which was sheared, dyed, spun, and woven during this march. The leaders of the company understood the people they had in charge, and they looked out for their good spirits. Captain Pitt's brass band was included in the equipment, and the camp was not thoroughly organized before, on a clear evening, a dance -- the Mormons have always been great dancers -- was announced, and the visiting Iowans looked on in amazement, to see these exiles from comfortable homes thus enjoying themselves on the open prairie, the highest dignitaries leading in Virginia reels and Copenhagen jigs.

John Taylor, whose pictures of this march, painted with a view to attract English emigrants, were always highly colored, estimated that, when he left Council Bluffs for England, in July, 1846, there were in camp and on the way 15,000 Mormons, with 3000 wagons, 30,000 head of cattle, a great many horses and mules, and a vast number of sheep. Colonel Kane says that, besides the wagons, there was "a large number of nondescript turnouts, the motley makeshifts of poverty; from the unsuitable heavy cart that lumbered on mysteriously, with its sick driver hidden under its counterpane cover, to the crazy two-wheeled trundle, such as our own poor employ in the conveyance of their slop barrels, this pulled along, it may be, by a little dry-dugged heifer, and rigged up only to drag some such light weight as a baby, a sack of meal or a pack of clothes and bedding."¹

There was no large supply of cash to keep this army and its

¹ "The Mormons," a lecture by Colonel T. L. Kane.

animals in provisions. Every member who could contribute to the commissary department by his labor was expected to do so. The settlers in the territory seem to have been in need of such assistance, and were very glad to pay for it in grain, hay, or provisions. A letter from one of the emigrants to a friend in England¹ said that, in every settlement they passed through, they found plenty of work, digging wells and cellars, splitting rails, threshing, ploughing, and clearing land. Some of the

men in the spring were sent south into Missouri, not more than forty miles from Far West, in search of employment. This they readily secured, no one raising the least objection to a Mormon who was not to be a permanent settler. Others were sent into that state to exchange horses, feather beds, and other personal property for cows and provisions.

A part of the plan of operations provided for sending out pioneers to select the route and camping sites, to make bridges where they were necessary, and to open roads. The party carried light boats, but a good many bridges seem to have been required because of the spring freshets. It was while resting after a march through prolonged rain and mud, late in April, that it was decided to establish the permanent camp called Garden Grove. Hundreds of men were at once set to work, making log houses and fences, digging wells, and ploughing, and soon hundreds of acres were enclosed and planted.

The progress made during April was exasperatingly slow. There was soft mud during the day, and rough ruts in the early morning. Sometimes camp would be pitched after making only a mile; sometimes they would think they had done well if they had made six. The animals, in fact, were so thin from lack of food that they could not do a day's work even under favorable circumstances. The route, after the middle of April, was turned to the north, and they then travelled over a broken prairie country, where the game had been mostly killed off by the Pottawottomi Indians, whose trails and abandoned camps were encountered constantly.

On May 16, as the two Pratts and others were in advance, locating the route, P. P. Pratt discovered the site of what was called Mt. Pisgah (the post-office of Mt. Pisgah of to-day) which he thus describes: "Riding about three or four miles over beautiful

¹ *Millennial Star*, Vol. VIII, p. 59.

prairies, I came suddenly to some round sloping hills, grassy, and crowned with beautiful groves of timber, while alternate open groves

and forests seemed blended into all the beauty and harmony of an English park. Beneath and beyond, on the west, rolled a main branch of Grand River, with its rich bottoms of alternate forest and prairie."¹ As soon as Young and the other high dignitaries arrived, it was decided to form a settlement there, and several thousand acres were enclosed for cultivation, and many houses were built.

Young and most of the first party continued their westward march through an uninhabited country, where they had to make their own roads. But they met with no opposition from Indians, and the head of the procession reached the banks of the Missouri near Council Bluffs in June, other companies following in quite rapid succession.

The company which was the last to leave Nauvoo (on September 17), driven out by the Hancock County forces, endured sufferings much greater than did the early companies who were conducted by Brigham Young. The latter comprised the well-to-do of the city and all the high officers of the church, while the remnant left behind was made up of the sick and those who had not succeeded in securing the necessary equipment for the journey. Brayman, in his second report to Governor Ford, said: --

"Those of the Mormons who were wealthy or possessed desirable real estate in the city had sold and departed last spring. I am inclined to the opinion that the leaders of the church took with them all the movable wealth of their people that they could control, without making proper provision for those who remained. Consequently there was much destitution among them; much sickness and distress. I traversed the city, and visited in company with a practising physician the sick, and almost invariably found them destitute, to a painful extent, of the comforts of life."²

It was on the 18th of September that the last of these unfortunates crossed the river, making 640 who were then collected on the west bank. Illness had not been accepted by the "posse" as an excuse for delay. Thomas Bullock says that his family, consisting of a husband, wife, blind mother-in-law, four children, and an aunt, "all shaking with the ague," were given twenty minutes

¹ Pratt's "Autobiography," p. 381.

² *Warsaw Signal*, October 20, 1846.

in which to get their goods into two wagons and start.¹ The west bank in Iowa, where the people landed, was marshy and unhealthy, and the suffering at what was called "Poor Camp," a short distance above Montrose, was intense. Severe storms were frequent, and the best cover that some of the people could obtain was a tent made of a blanket or a quilt, or even of brush, or the shelter to be had under the wagons of those who were fortunate enough to be thus equipped. Bullock thus describes one night's experience: "On Monday, September 23, while in my wagon on the slough opposite Nauvoo, a most tremendous thunderstorm passed over, which drenched everything we had. Not a dry thing left us -- the bed a pool of water, my wife and mother-in-law lading it out by basinfuls, and I in a burning fever and insensible, with all my hair shorn off to cure me of my disease. A poor woman stood among the bushes, wrapping her cloak around her three little orphan children, to shield them from the storm as well as she could." The supply of food, too, was limited, their flour being wheat ground in hand mills, and even this at times failing; then roasted corn was substituted, the grain being mixed by some with slippery elm bark to eke it out.² The people of Hancock County contributed something in the way of clothing and provisions and a little money in aid of these sufferers, and the trustees of the church who were left in Nauvoo to sell property gave what help they could.

On October 9 wagons sent back by the earlier emigrants for their unfortunate brethren had arrived, and the start for the Missouri began. Bullock relates that, just as they were ready to set out, a great flight of quails settled in the camp, running around the wagons so near that they could be knocked over with sticks, and the children caught some alive. One bird lighted upon their tea board, in the midst of the cups, while they were at breakfast. It was estimated that five hundred of the birds were flying about the camp that day, but when one hundred had been killed or caught, the captain forbade the killing of any more, "as it was a direct manifestation and visitation by the Lord." Young closes his account of this incident with the words, "Tell this to the nations of the earth! Tell it to the kings and nobles and great ones."

¹ *Millennial Star*, Vol. X, p. 28.

² Bancroft's "History of Utah," p. 233.

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Wells, in his manuscript, "Utah Notes" (quoted by H. H. Bancroft), says: "This phenomenon extended some thirty or forty miles along the river, and was generally observed. The quail in immense quantities had attempted to cross the river, but this being beyond their strength, had dropped into the river boats or on the banks."¹

The westward march of these refugees was marked by more hardships than that of the earlier bodies, because they were in bad physical condition and were in no sense properly equipped. Council Bluffs was not reached till November 27.

The division of the emigrants and their progress was thus noted in an interview, printed in the *Nauvoo Eagle* of July 10, with a person who had left Council Bluffs on June 26, coming East. The advance company, including the Twelve, with a train of 1000 wagons, was then encamped on the east bank of the Missouri, the men being busy building boats. The second company, 3000 strong, were at Mt. Pisgah, recruiting their cattle for a new start. The third company had halted at Garden Grove. Between Garden Grove and the Mississippi River the *Eagle's* informant counted more than 1000 wagons on their way west. He estimated the total number of teams engaged in this movement at about 3700, and the number of persons on the road at 12,000. The *Eagle* added: --"From 2000 to 3000 have disappeared from Nauvoo in various directions, and about 800 or less still remain in Illinois. This comprises the entire Mormon population that once flourished in Hancock County. In their palmy days they probably numbered 15,000 or 16,000."

The camp that had been formed at Mt. Pisgah suffered severely from the start. Provisions were scarce, and a number of families were dependent for food on neighbors who had little enough for themselves. Fodder for the cattle gave out, too, and in the early spring the only substitute was buds and twigs of trees. Snow notes as a calamity the

death of his milch cow, which had been driven all the way from Ohio. Along with their destitution came sickness, and at times during the following winter it seemed as if there were not enough of the well to supply the needed nurses. So many deaths occurred during that autumn and winter that a funeral came to be conducted with little ceremony, and even the

¹ Bancroft's "History of Utah," p. 234, note.

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customary burial clothes could not be provided.¹ Elder W. Huntington, the presiding officer of the settlement, was among the early victims, and Lorenzo Snow, the recent head of the Mormon church, succeeded him. During Snow's stay there three of his four wives gave birth to children.

Notwithstanding these depressing circumstances, the camp was by no means inactive during the winter. Those who were well were kept busy repairing wagons, and making, in a rude way, such household articles as were most needed -- chairs, tubs, and baskets. Parties were sent out to the settlements within reach to work, accepting food and clothing as pay, and two elders were selected to visit the states in search of contributions. These efforts were so successful that about \$600 was raised, and the camp sent to Brigham Young at Council Bluffs a load of provisions as a New Year's gift.

The usual religious meetings were kept up during the winter, and the utility of amusements in such a settlement was not forgotten. Ingenuity was taxed to give variety to the social entertainments. Snow describes a "party" that he gave in his family mansion -- "a one-story edifice about fifteen by thirty feet, constructed of logs, with a dirt roof, a ground floor, and a chimney made of sod." Many a man compelled to house four wives (one of them with three sons by a former husband) in such a mansion would have felt excused from entertaining company. But the Snows did not. For a carpet the floor was strewn with straw. The logs of the sides of the room were concealed with sheets. Hollowed turnips provided candelabras, which were stuck around the walls and

suspended from the roof. The company were entertained with songs, recitations, conundrums, etc., and all voted that they had a very jolly time.

In the larger camps the travellers were accustomed to make what they called "boweries" -- large arbors covered with a framework of poles, and thatched with brush or branches. The making of such "boweries" was continued by the Saints in Utah.

¹ "Biography of Lorenzo Snow," p. 90.

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CHAPTER III

THE MORMON BATTALION

DURING the halt of a part of the main body of the Mormons at Mt. Pisgah, an incident occurred which has been made the subject of a good deal of literature, and has been held up by the Mormons as a proof both of the severity of the American government toward them and of their own patriotism. There is so little ground for either of these claims that the story of the Battalion should be correctly told.

When hostilities against Mexico began, early in 1846, the plan of campaign designed by the United States authorities comprised an invasion of Mexico at two points, by Generals Taylor and Wool, and a descent on Santa Fe, and thence a march into California. This march was to be made by General Stephen F. Kearney, who was to command the volunteers raised in Missouri, and the few hundred regular troops then at Fort Leavenworth. In gathering his force General (then Colonel) Kearney sent Captain J. Allen of the First Dragoons to the Mormons at Mt. Pisgah, not with an order of any kind, but with a written proposition, dated June 26, 1846, that he "would accept the

service, for twelve months, of four or five companies of Mormon men" (each numbering from 73 to 109), to unite with the Army of the West at Santa Fe, and march thence to California, where they would be discharged. These volunteers were to have the regular volunteers' pay and allowances, and permission to retain at their discharge the arms and equipments with which they would be provided, the age limit to be between eighteen and forty-five years. The most practical inducement held out to the Mormons to enlist was thus explained: "Thus is offered to the Mormon people now -- this year -- an opportunity of sending a portion of their young and intelligent men to the ultimate destination of their whole people, and entirely at the expense of

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the United States; and this advance party can thus pave the way and look out the land for their brethren to come after them." There was nothing like a "demand" on the Mormons in this invitation, and the advantage of accepting it was largely on the Mormon side. If it had not been, it would have been rejected. That the government was in no stress for volunteers is shown by the fact that General Kearney reported to the War Department in the following August that he had more troops than he needed, and that he proposed to use some of them to reenforce General Wool.¹

The initial suggestion about the raising of these Mormon volunteers came from a Mormon source.² In the spring of 1846 Jesse C. Little, a Mormon elder of the Eastern states, visited Washington with letters of introduction from Governor Steele of New Hampshire and Colonel Thomas L. Kane of Philadelphia, hoping to secure from the government a contract to carry provisions or naval stores to the Pacific coast, and thus pay part of the expense of conveying Mormons to California by water. According to Little, this matter was laid before the cabinet, who proposed that he should visit the Mormon camp and raise 1000 picked men to make a dash for California overland, while as many more would be sent around Cape Horn from the Eastern states. This big scheme, according to Mormon accounts, was upset by one of the hated Missourians, Senator Thomas H. Benton, whose Macchiavellian mind had designed the plan of taking from the

Mormons 500 of their best men for the Battalion, thus crippling them while in the Indian country. All this part of their account is utterly unworthy of belief. If 500 volunteers for the army "crippled" the immigrants where they were, what would have been their condition if 1000 of their number had been hurried on to California?³

Aside from the opportunity afforded by General Kearney's invitation to send a pioneer band, without expense to themselves, to the Pacific coast, the offer gave the Mormons great, and greatly needed, pecuniary assistance. P. P. Pratt, on his way East to visit

¹ Chase's "History of the Polk Administration," p. 16.

² Tullidge's "Life of Brigham Young," p. 47.

³ Delegate Berahisel, in a letter to President Fillmore (December 1, 1851), replying to a charge by Judge Brocchus that the 24th of July orators had complained of the conduct of the government in taking the Battalion from them for service against Mexico, said, "The government *did not take* from us a battalion of men," the Mormons furnishing them in response to a call for volunteers.

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England with Taylor and Hyde, found the Battalion at Fort Leavenworth, and was sent back to the camp¹ with between \$5000 and \$6000, a part of the Battalion's government allowance. This was a godsend where cash was so scarce, as it enabled the commissary officers to make purchases in St. Louis, where prices were much lower than in western Iowa.² John Taylor, in a letter to the Saints in Great Britain on arriving there, quoted the acceptance of this Battalion as evidence that "the President of the United States is favorably disposed to us," and said that their employment in the army, as there was no prospect of any fighting, "amounts to the same as paying them for going where they were destined to go without."³

The march of the federal force that went from Santa Fe (where the Mormon Battalion arrived in October) to California was a notable one, over unexplored deserts, where food was scarce and water for long distances unobtainable. Arriving at the junction of the Gila and Colorado rivers on December 26, they received there an order to march

to San Diego, California, and arrived there on January 29, after a march of over two thousand miles.

The war in California was over at that date, but the Battalion did garrison duty at San Luis Rey, and then at Los Angeles. Various propositions for their reenlistment were made to them, but their church officers opposed this, and were obeyed except in some individual instances. About 150 of those who set out from Santa Fe were sent back invalided before California was reached, and the number mustered out was only about 240. These at once started eastward, but, owing to news received concerning the hardships of the first Mormons who arrived in Salt Lake Valley, many of them decided to remain in California, and a number were hired by Sutter, on whose mill-race the first discovery of gold in that state was made. Those who kept on reached Salt Lake Valley on October 16, 1847. Thirty-two of their number continued their march to Winter Quarters on the Missouri, where they arrived on December 18.

Mormon historians not only present the raising of the Battalion as a proof of patriotism, but ascribe to the members of that force

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2 "History of Brigham Young," Ms., 1846, p. 150.

3 *Millennial Star*, Vol. VIII, p. 117.

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the credit of securing California to the United States, and the discovery of gold.¹

When Elder Little left Washington for the West with despatches for General Kearney concerning the Mormon enlistments, he was accompanied by Colonel Thomas L. Kane, a brother of the famous Arctic explorer. On his way West Colonel Kane visited Nauvoo while the Hancock County posse were in possession of it, saw the expelled Mormons in their camp across the river, followed the trail of those who had reached the Missouri, and lay ill among them in the unhealthy Missouri bottom in 1847. From that time Colonel Kane became one of

the most useful agents of the Mormon church in the Eastern states, and, as we shall see, performed for them services which only a man devoted to the church, but not openly a member of it, could have accomplished.

It was stated at the time that Colonel Kane was baptized by Young at Council Bluffs in 1847. His future course gives every reason to accept the correctness of this view. He served the Mormons in the East as a Jesuit would have served his order in earlier days in France or Spain. He bore false witness in regard to polygamy and to the character of men high in the church as unblushingly as a Brigham Young or a Kimball could have done. His lecture before the Historical Society of Pennsylvania in 1850 was highly colored where it stated facts, and so inaccurate in other parts that it is of little use to the historian. A Mormon writer who denied that Kane was a member of the church offered as proof of this the statement that, had Kane been a Mormon, Young would have commanded him instead of treating him with so much respect. But Young was not a fool, and was quite capable of appreciating the value of a secret agent at the federal capital.

¹ "The Mormons have always been disposed to overestimate the value of their services during this period, attaching undue importance to the current rumors of intending revolt on the part of the Californians, and of the approach of Mexican troops to reconquer the province. They also claim the credit of having enabled Kearney to sustain his authority against the revolutionary pretensions of Fremont. The merit of this claim will be apparent to the readers of preceding chapters." -- Bancroft, "History of California," Vol. V, p. 487.

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CHAPTER IV

THE CAMPS ON THE MISSOURI

MORMON accounts of the westward movement from Nauvoo represent that the delay which occurred when they reached the Missouri River

was an interruption of their leaders' plans, attributing it to the weakening of their force by the enlistment of the Battalion, and the necessity of waiting for the last Mormons who were driven out of Nauvoo. But after their experiences in a winter march from the Mississippi, with something like a base of supplies in reach, it is inconceivable that the Council would have led their followers farther into the unknown West that same year, when their stores were so nearly exhausted, and there was no region before them in which they could make purchases, even if they had the means to do so.

When the Mormons arrived on the Missouri they met with a very friendly welcome. They found the land east of the river occupied by the Pottawottomi Indians, who had recently been removed from their old home in what is now Michigan and northern Illinois and Indiana; and the west side occupied by the Omahas, who had once "considered all created things as made for their peculiar use and benefit," but whom the smallpox and the Sioux had many years before reduced to a miserable remnant.

The Mormons won the heart of the Pottawottomies by giving them a concert at their agent's residence. A council followed, at which their chief, Pied Riche, surnamed Le Clerc, made an address, giving the Mormons permission to cut wood, make improvements, and live where they pleased on their lands.

The principal camp on the Missouri, known as Winter Quarters, was on the west bank, on what is now the site of Florence, Nebraska. A council was held with the Omaha chiefs in the latter part of August, and Big Elk, in reply to an address by Brigham

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Young, recited their sufferings at the hands of the Sioux, and told the whites that they could stay there for two years and have the use of firewood and timber, and that the young men of the Indians would watch their cattle and warn them of any danger. In return, the Indians asked for the use of teams to draw in their harvest, for assistance in house-building, ploughing, and blacksmithing, and that a traffic in

goods be established. An agreement to this effect was put in writing.

The arrival of party after party of Mormons made an unusually busy scene on the river banks. On the east side every hill that helped to make up the Council Bluffs was occupied with tents and wagons, while the bottom was crowded with cattle and vehicles on the way to the west side. Kane counted four thousand head of cattle from a single elevation, and says that the Mormon herd numbered thirty thousand. Along the banks of the river and creeks the women were doing their family washing, while men were making boats and superintending in every way the passage of the river by some, and the preparations for a stay on the east side by others -- building huts, breaking the sod for grain, etc. The Pottawottomies had cut an approach to the river opposite a trading post of the American Fur Company, and established a ferry there, and they now did a big business carrying over, in their flat-bottom boats, families and their wagons, and the cows and sheep. As for the oxen, they were forced to swim, and great times the boys had, driving them to the bank, compelling them to take the initial plunge, and then guiding them across by taking the lead astride some animal's back.

Sickness in the camps began almost as soon as they were formed. "Misery Bottom," as it was then called, received the rich deposit brought down by the river in the spring, and, when the river retired into its banks, became a series of mud flats, described as "mere quagmires of black dirt, stretching along for miles, unvaried except by the limbs of half-buried carrion, tree trunks, or by occasional yellow pools of what the children called frog's spawn; all together steaming up vapors redolent of the savor of death." In the previous year -- not an unusually bad one -- one-ninth of the Indian population on these flats had died in two months. The Mormons suffered not only from the malaria of the river bottom, but from the breaking up of many acres of the soil in their farming operations.

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The illness was diagnosed as, the usual malarial fever, accompanied in many cases with scorbutic symptoms, which they called "black canker," due to a lack of vegetable food. In and around Winter Quarters there

were more than 600 burials before cold weather set in, and 334 out of a population of 3483 were reported on the sick list as late as December. The Papillon Camp, on the Little Butterfly River, was a deadly site. Kane, who had the fever there, in passing by the place earlier in the season had opened an Indian mound, leaving a deep trench through it. "My first airing," he says, "upon my convalescence, took me to the mound, which, probably to save digging, had been readapted to its original purpose. In this brief interval they had filled the trench with bodies, and furrowed the ground with graves around it, like the ploughing of a field."

But amid such affliction, in which cows went un milked and corpses became loathsome before men could be found to bury them, preparations continued at all the camps for the winter's stay and next year's supplies. Brigham Young, writing from Winter Quarters on January 6, 1847, to the elders in England, said: "We have upward of seven hundred houses in our miniature city, composed mostly of logs in the body, covered with puncheon, straw, and dirt, which are warm and wholesome; a few are composed of turf, willows, straw, etc., which are comfortable this winter, but will not endure the thaws, rain, and sunshine of spring."¹ This city was divided into twenty-two wards, each presided over by a Bishop. The principal buildings were the Council House, thirty-two by twenty-four feet, and Dr. Richard's house, called the Octagon, and described as resembling the heap of earth piled up over potatoes to shield them from frost. In this Octagon the High Council held most of their meetings. A great necessity was a flouring mill, and accordingly they sent to St. Louis for the stones and gearing, and, under Brigham Young's personal direction as a carpenter, the mill was built and made ready for use in January. The money sent back by the Battalion was expended in St. Louis for sugar and other needed articles.

As usual with the pictures sent to Europe, Young's description of the comfort of the winter camp was exaggerated. P. P. Pratt, who arrived at Winter Quarters from his mission to Europe on April 8, 1847, says:

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¹ *Millennial Star*, Vol. IX, p. 97.

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"I found my family all alive, and dwelling in a log cabin. They had, however, suffered much from cold, hunger, and sickness. They had often times lived for several days on a little corn meal, ground in a hand mill, with no other food. One of the family was then lying very sick with the scurvy -- a disease which had been very prevalent in camp during the winter, and of which many had died. I found, on inquiry, that the winter had been very severe, the snow deep, and consequently that all my four horses were lost, and I afterward ascertained that out of twelve cows, I had but seven left, and, out of some twelve or fourteen oxen, only four or five were saved."

If this was the plight in which the spring found the family of one of the Twelve, imagination can picture the suffering of the hundreds who had arrived with less provision against the rigors of such a winter climate.

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CHAPTER V

THE PIONEER TRIP ACROSS THE PLAINS

DURING the winter of 1846-1847 preparations were under way to send an organization of pioneers across the plains and beyond the Rocky Mountains, to select a new dwelling-place for the Saints. The only "revelation" to Brigham Young found in the "Book of Doctrine and Covenants" is a direction about the organization and mission of this expedition. It was dated January 14, 1847, and it directed the organization of the pioneers into companies, with captains of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens, and a president and two counsellors at their head, under charge of the Twelve. Each company was to provide its own equipment, and to take seeds and farming implements. "Let every man," it commanded, "use all his influence and property to remove this people to the place where the Lord shall locate a Stake of Zion." The power of the head of the church was guarded by a threat that "if any

man shall seek to build up himself he shall have no power," and the "revelation" ended, like a rustic's letter, with the words, "So no more at present," "amen and amen" being added.

In accordance with this command, on April 14¹ a pioneer band of volunteers set out to blaze a path, so to speak, across the plains and mountains for the main body which was to follow.

It is difficult to-day, when this "Far West" is in possession of the agriculturist, the merchant, and the miner, dotted with cities and flourishing towns, and cut in all directions by railroads, which have made pleasure routes for tourists of the trail over which the pioneers of half a century ago toiled with difficulty and danger, to realize how vague were the ideas of even the best informed in the thirties and forties about the physical characteristics of that country and its future possibilities. The conception of the latter may be

¹ Date given in the General Epistle of December 23, 1847. Others say April 7.

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best illustrated by quoting Washington Irving's idea, as expressed in his "Astoria," written in 1836: --

"Such is the nature of this immense wilderness of the far West; which apparently defies cultivation and the habitation of civilized life. Some portion of it, along the rivers, may partially be subdued by agriculture, others may form vast pastoral tracts like those of the East; but it is to be feared that a great part of it will form a lawless interval between the abodes of civilized man, like the wastes of the ocean or the deserts of Arabia, and, like them, be subject to the depredations of the marauders. There may spring up new and mongrel races, like new formations in zoology, the amalgamation of the 'debris' and 'abrasions' of former races, civilized and savage; the remains of broken and extinguished tribes; the descendants of wandering hunters and trappers; of fugitives from the Spanish-American frontiers; of adventurers and desperadoes of every class and country, yearly ejected from the bosom of society into the wilderness.... Some may gradually become pastoral hordes, like those rude and migratory people, half shepherd, half warrior, who, with their flocks and herds, roam the plains of upper Asia; but others, it is to be apprehended, will become predatory bands, mounted on the fleet steeds of the prairies, with the open plains for their marauding grounds, and the mountains for their retreats and lurking places. There

they may resemble those great hordes of the North, 'Gog and Magog with their bands,' that haunted the gloomy imaginations of the prophets -- 'A great company and a mighty host, all riding upon horses, and warring upon those nations which were at rest, and dwelt peaceably, and had gotten cattle and goods.'"

"What about the country between the Missouri River and the Pacific," asked a father living near the Missouri, of his son on his return from California across the plains in 1851 -- "Oh, it's of no account," was the reply; "the soil is poor, sandy, and too dry to produce anything but this little short grass afterward learned to be so rich in nutriment, and, when it does rain, in three hours afterward you could not tell that it had rained at all."¹

But while this distant West was still so unknown to the settled parts of the country, these Mormon pioneers were by no means the first to traverse it, as the records of the journeyings of Lewis and Clark, Ezekiel Williams, General W. H. Ashley, Wilson Price Hunt, Major S. H. Long, Captain W. Sublette, Bonneville, Fremont, and others show.

The pioneer band of the Mormons consisted of 143 men, three women (wives of Brigham and Lorenzo Young and H. C. Kimball), and two children. They took with them seventy-three wagons. Their

¹ Nebraska Historical Society papers.

chief officers were Brigham Young, Lieutenant General; Stephen Markham, Colonel; John Pack, First Major; Shadrack Roundy, Second Major, two captains of hundreds, and fourteen captains of companies. The order of march was intelligently arranged, with a view to the probability of meeting Indians who, if not dangerous to life, had little regard for personal property. The Indians of the Platte region were notorious thieves, but had not the reputation as warriors of their more northern neighbors. The regulations required that each private should walk constantly beside his wagon, leaving it only by his officer's command. In order to make as compact a force as possible, two wagons were to move abreast whenever this could be done. Every man was to keep his weapons loaded, and special care was insisted upon that the

caps, flints, and locks should be in good condition. They had with them one small cannon mounted on wheels.

The bugle for rising sounded at 5 A.M., and two hours were allowed for breakfast and prayers. At night each man was to retire into his wagon for prayer at 8.30 o'clock, and for the night's rest at 9. The night camp was formed by drawing up the wagons in a semicircle, with the river in the rear, if they camped near its bank, or otherwise with the wagons in a circle, a forewheel of one touching the hind wheel of the next. In this way an effective corral for the animals was provided within.

At the head of Grand Island, on April 30, they had their first sight of buffaloes. A hunting party was organized at once, and a herd of sixty-five of the animals was pursued for several miles in full view of the camp (when game and hunters were not hidden by the dust), and so successfully that eleven buffaloes were killed.

The first alarm of Indians occurred on May 4, when scouts reported a band of about four hundred a few miles ahead. The wagons were at once formed five abreast, the cannon was fired as a means of alarm, and the company advanced in close formation. The Indians did not attack them, but they set fire to the prairie, and this caused a halt. A change of wind the next morning and an early shower checked the flames, and the column moved on again at daybreak. During the next few days the buffaloes were seen in herds of hundreds of thousands on both sides of the Platte. So numerous were they that the company had to stop at times and let gangs of the animals pass on either side, and several calves

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were captured alive.¹ With or near the buffaloes were seen antelopes and wolves.

At Grand Island the question of their further route was carefully debated. There was a well-known trail to Fort Laramie on the south side of the river, used by those who set out from Independence,

Missouri, for Oregon. Good pasture was assured on that side, but it was argued that, if this party made a new trail along the north side of the river, the Mormons would have what might be considered a route of their own, separated from other westward emigrants. This view prevailed, and the course then selected became known in after years as the Mormon Trail (sometimes called the "Old Mormon Road"); the line of the Union Pacific Railroad follows it for many miles.

Their decision caused them a good deal of anxiety about forage for their animals before they reached Fort Laramie. It had not rained at the latter point for two years, and the drought, together with the vast herds of buffaloes and the Indian fires, made it for days impossible to find any pasture except in small patches. When the fort was reached, they had fed their animals not only a large part of their grain, but some of their crackers and other breadstuff, and the beasts were so weak that they could scarcely drag the wagons.

During the previous winter the church officers had procured for their use from England two sextants and other instruments needed for taking solar observations, two barometers, thermometers, etc., and these were used by Orson Pratt daily to note their progress.² Two of the party also constructed a sort of pedometer, and, after leaving Fort Laramie, a mile-post was set up every ten miles, for the guidance of those who were to follow.

In the camp made on May 10 the first of the Mormon post-offices on the plains was established. Into a board six inches wide and eighteen long, a cut was made with a saw, and in this cut a letter was placed. After nailing on cleats to retain the letter, and addressing the board to the officers of the next company, the board was nailed to a fifteen-foot pole, which was set firmly in the

¹ "The vast herds of buffalo were often in our way, and we were under the necessity of sending out advance guards to clear the track so that our teams might pass." ERASTUS SNOW, "Address to the Pioneers," in *Mo.*

² His diary of the trip will be found in the *Millennial Star* for 1849-1850, full of interesting details, but evidently edited for English readers.

ground near the trail, and left to its fate. How successful this attempt at communication proved is not stated, but similar means of communication were in use during the whole period of Mormon migration. Sometimes a copy of the camp journal was left conspicuously in the crotch of a tree, for the edification of the next camp, and scores of the buffaloes' skulls that dotted the plains were marked with messages and set up along the trail.

The weakness of the draught animals made progress slow at this time, and marches of from 4 to 7 miles a day were recorded. The men fared better, game being abundant. Signs of Indians were seen from time to time, and precautions were constantly taken to prevent a stampede of the animals; but no open attack was made. A few Indians visited the camp on May 21, and gave assurances of their friendliness; and on the 24th they had a visit from a party of thirty-five Dakotas (or Sioux who tendered a written letter of recommendation in French from one of the agents of the American Fur Company. The Mormons had to grant their request for permission to camp with them over night, which meant also giving them supper and breakfast -- no small demand on their hospitality when the capacity of the Indian stomach is understood).

Little occurred during May to vary the monotony of the journey. On the afternoon of June 1 they arrived nearly opposite Fort Laramie and the ruins of old Fort Platte, a point 522 miles from Winter Quarters, and 509 from Great Salt Lake. The so-called forts were in fact trading posts, established by the fur companies, both as points of supply for their trappers and trading places with the Indians for peltries. On the evening of their arrival at this point they had a visit from members of a party of Mormons gathered principally from Mississippi and southern Illinois, who had passed the winter in Pueblo, and were waiting to join the emigrants from Winter Quarters.

The Platte, usually a shallow stream, was at that place 108 yards wide, and too deep for wading. Brigham Young and some others crossed over the next morning in a sole-leather skiff which formed a part of their equipment, and were kindly welcomed by the commandant. There they learned that it would be impracticable -- or at least very difficult -- to continue along the north bank of the Platte, and they accordingly hired a flatboat to ferry the

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company and their wagons across. The crossing began on June 3, and on an average four wagons were ferried over in an hour.

Advantage was taken of this delay to set up, a bellows and forge, and make needed repairs to the wagons. At the Fort the Mormons learned that their old object of hatred in Missouri, ex-Governor Boggs, had recently passed by with a company of emigrants bound for the Pacific coast. Young's company came across other Missourians on the plains; but no hostilities ensued, the Missourians having no object now to interfere with the Saints, and the latter contenting themselves by noting in their diaries the profanity and quarrelsomeness of their old neighbors.

The journey was resumed at noon on June 4, along the Oregon trail. A small party of the Mormons was sent on in advance to the spot where the Oregon trail crossed the Platte, 124 miles west of Fort Laramie. This crossing was generally made by fording, but the river was too high for this, and the sole leather boat, which would carry from 1500 to 1800 pounds, was accordingly employed. The men with this boat reached the crossing in advance of the first party of Oregon emigrants whom they had encountered, and were employed by the latter to ferry their goods across while the empty wagons were floated. This proved a happy enterprise for the Mormons. The drain on their stock of grain and provisions had by this time so reduced their supply that they looked forward with no little anxiety to the long march. The Oregon party offered liberal pay in flour, sugar, bacon, and coffee for the use of the boat, and the terms were gladly accepted, although most of the persons served were Missourians. When the main body of pioneers started on from that point, they left ten men with the boat to maintain the ferry until the next company from Winter Quarters should come up.¹

The Mormons themselves were delayed at this crossing until June 19, making a boat on which a wagon could cross without unloading. During the first few days after leaving the North Platte grass and water were scarce. On June 21 they reached the Sweet Water, and, fording it, encamped within sight of Independence Rock, near the upper end of

Devil's Gate.

¹ "The Missourians paid them \$1.50 for each wagon and load, and paid it in flour at \$2.50; yet flour was worth \$10 per hundredweight, at least at that point. They divided their earnings among the camp equally." -- Tullidge, "Life of Brigham Young," p. 165.

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CHAPTER VI

FROM THE ROCKIES TO SALT LAKE VALLEY

MORE than one day's march was now made without finding water or grass. Banks of snow were observed on the near-by elevations, and overcoats were very comfortable at night. On June 26 they reached the South Pass, where the waters running to the Atlantic and to the Pacific separate. They found, however, no well-marked dividing ridge-only, as Pratt described it, "a quietly undulating plain or prairie, some fifteen or twenty miles in length and breadth, thickly covered with wild sage." There were good pasture and plenty of water, and they met there a small party who were making the journey from Oregon to the states on horseback.

All this time the leaders of the expedition had no definite view of their final stopping-place. Whenever Young was asked by any of his party, as they trudged along, what locality they were aiming for, his only reply was that he would recognize the site of their new home when he saw it, and that they would surely go on as the Lord would direct them.¹

While they were camping near South Pass, an incident occurred which narrowly escaped changing the plans of the Lord, if he had already selected Salt Lake Valley. One of the men whom the company met

there was a voyager whose judgment about a desirable site for a settlement naturally seemed worthy of consideration. This was T. L. Smith, better known as "Pegleg" Smith. He had been a companion of Jedediah S. Smith, one of Ashley's company of trappers, who had started from Great Salt Lake in August, 1826, and made his way to San Gabriel Mission in California, and thence eastward, reaching the Lake again in the spring of 1827. "Pegleg" had a trading post on Bear River above Soda Springs (in the present Idaho). He gave the Mormons a great deal of information

¹ Erastus Snow's "Address to the Pioneers," 1880.

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about all the valley which lay before them, and to the north and south. "He earnestly advised us," says Erastus Snow, "to direct our course northwestward from Bridger, and make our way into Cache Valley; and he so far made an impression upon the camp that we were induced to enter into an engagement with him to meet us at a certain time and place two weeks afterward, to pilot our company into that country. But for some reason, which to this day never to my knowledge has been explained, he failed to meet us; and I have ever recognized his failure to do so as a providence of an all-wise God."¹

"Pegleg's" reputation was as bad as that of any of those reckless trappers of his day, and perhaps, if the Mormons had known more about him, they would have given less heed to his advice, and counted less on his keeping his engagement.

With the returning Oregonians they also made the acquaintance of Major Harris, an old trapper and hunter in California and Oregon, who gave them little encouragement about Salt Lake Valley, as a place of settlement, principally because of the lack of timber. Two days later they met Colonel James Bridger, an authority on that part of the country, whose "fort" was widely known. Young told him that he proposed to take a look at Great Salt Lake Valley with a view to its settlement. Bridger affirmed that his experiments had more than convinced him that corn would not grow in those mountains, and,

when Young expressed doubts about this, he offered to give the Mormon President \$1000 for the first ear raised in that valley. Next they met a mountaineer named Goodyear, who had passed the last winter on the site of what is now Ogden, Utah, where he had tried without success to raise a little grain and a few vegetables. He told of severe cold in winter and drought in summer. Irrigation had not suggested itself to a man who had a large part of a continent in which to look for a more congenial farm site.

Mormons in all later years have said that they were guided to the Salt Lake Valley in fulfillment of the prediction of Joseph Smith that they would have to flee to the Rocky Mountains. But in their progress across the plains the leaders of the pioneers were not indifferent to any advice that came in their way, and in a manuscript "History of Brigham Young" (1847), quoted by H.

¹ "Address to the Pioneers," 1880.

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H. Bancroft, is the following entry, which may indicate the first suggestion that turned their attention from "California" to Utah: "On the 15th of June met James H. Grieve, William Tucker, James Woodrie, James Bouvoir, and six other Frenchmen, from whom we learned that Mr. Bridger was located about three hundred miles west, that the mountaineers could ride to Salt Lake from Fort Bridger in two days, and that the Utah country was beautiful."¹

The pioneers resumed their march on June 29, over a desolate country, travelling seventeen miles without finding grass or water, until they made their night camp on the Big Sandy. There they encountered clouds of mosquitoes, which made more than one subsequent camping-place very uncomfortable. A march of eight miles the next morning brought them to Green River. Finding this stream 180 yards wide, and deep and swift, they stopped long enough to make two rafts, on which they successfully ferried over all their wagons without unloading them.

At this point the pioneers met a brother Mormon who had made the

journey to California round the Horn, and had started east from there to meet the overland travellers. He had an interesting story to tell, the points of which, in brief, were as follows: --

A conference of Mormons, held in New York City on November 12, 1845, resolved to move in a body to the new home of the Saints. This emigration scheme was placed in charge of Samuel Brannan, a native of Maine, and an elder in the church, who was then editing the *New York Prophet*, and preaching there. Why so important a project was confided to Brannan seems a mystery, in view of P. P. Pratt's statement that, as early as the previous January, he had discovered that Brannan was among certain elders who "had been corrupting the Saints by introducing among them all manner of false doctrines and immoral practices;" he was afterward disfellowshipped at Nauvoo. By Pratt's advice he immediately went to that city, and was restored to full standing in the church, as any bad man always was when he acknowledged submission to the church authorities.² Plenty of emigrants offered themselves under Orson Pratt's call, but of the 300 first applicants for passage only about 60 had money enough to pay their expenses,

¹ Bancroft's "History of Utah," p. 257.

² Pratt's "Autobiography," p. 374.

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Although it was estimated that \$75 would cover the outlay for the trip. Brannan chartered the *Brooklyn*, a ship of 450 tons, and on February 4, 1846, she sailed with 70 men, 68 women, and 100 children.¹

The voyage to San Francisco ended on July 31. Ten deaths and two births occurred during the trip, and four of the company, including two elders and one woman, had to be excommunicated "for their wicked and licentious conduct." Three others were dealt with in the same way as soon as the company landed.² On landing they found the United States in possession of the country, which led to Brannan's reported remark, "There is that d -- d flag again." The men of the party, some

of whom had not paid all their passage money, at once sought work, but the company did not hold together. Before the end of the year some 20 more "went astray," in church parlance; some decided to remain on the coast when they learned that the church was to make Salt Lake Valley its headquarters, and some time later about 140 reached Utah and took up their abode there.

Brannan fell from grace and was pronounced by P. P. Pratt "a corrupt and wicked man." While he was getting his expedition in shape, he sent to the church authorities in the West a copy of an agreement which he said he had made with A. G. Benson, an alleged agent of Postmaster General Kendall. Benson was represented as saying that, unless the Mormon leaders signed an agreement, to which President Polk was a "silent partner," by which they would "transfer to A. G. Benson and Co., and to their heirs and assigns, the odd number of all the lands and town lots they may acquire in the country where they settle," the President would order them to be dispersed. This seems to have been too transparent a scheme to deceive Young, and the agreement was not signed.

The march of the pioneers was resumed on July 3. That evening they were told that those who wished to return eastward to meet their families, who were perhaps five hundred miles back with the second company, could do so; but only five of them took advantage of this permission. The event of Sunday, July 4, was the arrival of thirteen members of the Battalion, who had pushed on in

¹ Bancroft's figures, "History of California," Vol. V, Chap. 20.

² Brannan's letter, *Millennial Star*, Vol. IX, pp. 306-307.

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advance of the main body of those who were on the way from Pueblo, in order that they might recover some horses stolen from them, which they were told were at Bridger's Fort. They said that the main body of 140 were near at hand. This company had been directed in their course by instructions sent to them by Brigham Young from a point near Fort Laramie.

The hardships of the trip had told on the pioneers, and a number of them were now afflicted with what they called "mountain fever." They attributed this to the clouds of dust that enveloped the column of wagons when in motion, and to the decided change of temperature from day to night. For six weeks, too, most of them had been without bread, living on the meat provided by the hunters, and saving the little flour that was left for the sick.

The route on July 5 kept along the right bank of the Green River for about three miles, and then led over the bluffs and across a sandy, waterless plain for sixteen miles, to the left bank of Black's Fork, where they camped for the night. The two following days took them across this Fork several times, but, although fording was not always comfortable, the stream added salmon trout to their menu. On the 7th the party had a look at Bridger's Fort, of which they had heard often. Orson Pratt described it at the time as consisting "of two adjoining log houses, dirt roofs, and a small picket yard of logs set in the ground, and about eight feet high. The number of men, squaws, and half-breed children in these houses and lodges may be about fifty or sixty."

At the camp, half a mile from the fort, that night ice formed. The next day the blacksmiths were kept busy repairing wagons and shoeing horses in preparation for a trail through the mountains. On the 9th and 10th they passed over a hilly country, camping on Beaver River on the night of the 10th.

The fever had compelled several halts on account of the condition of the patients, and on the 12th it was found that Brigham Young was too ill to travel. In order not to lose time, Orson Pratt, with forty-three men and twenty-three wagons, was directed to push on into Salt Lake Valley, leaving a trail that the others could follow. From the information obtainable at Fort Bridger it was decided that the canon leading into the valley would be found impassable on account of high water, and that they should direct their course over the mountains.

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These explorers set out on July 14, travelling down Red Fork, a small

stream which ran through a narrow valley, whose sides in places were from eight hundred to twelve hundred feet high, -- red sandstone walls, perpendicular or overhanging. This route was a rough one, requiring frequent fordings of the stream, and they did well to advance thirteen miles that day. On the 15th they discovered a mountain trail that had been recommended to them, but it was a mere trace left by wagons that had passed over it a year before. They came now to the roughest country they had found, and it became necessary to send sappers in advance to open a road before the wagons could pass over it. Almost discouraged, Pratt turned back on foot the next day, to see if he could not find a better route; but he was soon convinced that only the one before them led in the direction they were to take. The wagons were advanced only four and three-quarters miles that day, even the creek bottom being so covered with a growth of willows that to cut through these was a tiresome labor. Pratt and a companion, during the day, climbed a mountain, which they estimated to be about two thousand feet high, but they only saw, before and around them, hills piled on hills and mountains on mountains, -- the outlines of the Wahsatch and Uinta ranges.

On Monday, the 18th, Pratt again acted as advance explorer, and went ahead with one companion. Following a ravine on horseback for four miles, they then dismounted and climbed to an elevation from which, in the distance, they saw a level prairie which they thought could not be far from Great Salt Lake. The whole party advanced only six and a quarter miles that day and six the next.

One day later Erastus Snow came up with them, and Pratt took him along as a companion in his advance explorations. They discovered a point where the travellers of the year before had ascended a hill to avoid a canon through which a creek dashed rapidly. Following in their predecessors' footsteps, when they arrived at the top of this hill there lay stretched out before them "abroad, open valley about twenty miles wide and thirty long, at the north end of which the waters of the Great Salt Lake glistened in the sunbeams." Snow's account of their first view of the valley and lake is as follows: --

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"The thicket down the narrows, at the mouth of the canon, was so dense that we could not penetrate through it. I crawled for some distance on my hands and knees through this thicket, until I was compelled to return, admonished to by the rattle of a snake which lay coiled up under my nose, having almost put my hand on him; but as he gave me the friendly warning, I thanked him and retreated. We raised on to a high point south of the narrows, where we got a view of the Great Salt Lake and this valley, and each of us, without saying a word to the other, instinctively, as if by inspiration, raised our hats from our heads, and then, swinging our hats, shouted, 'Hosannah to God and the Lamb!' We could see the canes down in the valley, on what is now called Mill Creek, which looked like inviting grain, and thitherward we directed our course."¹

Having made an inspection of the valley, the two explorers rejoined their party about ten o'clock that evening. The next day, with great labor, a road was cut through the canon down to the valley, and on July 22 Pratt's entire company camped on City Creek, below the present Emigration Street in Salt Lake City. The next morning, after sending word of their discovery to Brigham Young, the whole party moved some two miles farther north, and there, after prayer, the work of putting in a crop was begun. The necessity of irrigation was recognized at once. "We found the land so dry," says Snow, "that to plough it was impossible, and in attempting to do so some of the ploughs were broken. We therefore had to distribute the water over the land before it could be worked." When the rest of the pioneers who had remained with Young reached the valley the next day, they found about six acres of potatoes and other vegetables already planted.

While Apostles like Snow might have been as transported with delight over the aspect of the valley as he professed to be, others of the party could see only a desolate, treeless plain, with sage brush supplying the vegetation. To the women especially the outlook was most depressing.

¹ "Address to the Pioneers," 1880.

CHAPTER VII

THE FOLLOWING COMPANIES -- LAST DAYS ON THE MISSOURI

WHEN the pioneers set out from the Missouri, instructions were left for the organization of similar companies who were to follow their trail, without waiting to learn their ultimate destination or how they fared on the way. These companies were in charge of prominent men like Parley P. Pratt, John Taylor, Bishop Hunter, Daniel Spencer, who succeeded Smith as mayor of Nauvoo, and J. M. Grant, the first mayor of Salt Lake City after its incorporation.

P. P. Pratt set out early in June, as soon as he could get his wagons and equipment in order, for Elk Horn River, where a sort of rendezvous was established, and a rough ferry boat put in operation. Hence started about the Fourth of July the big company which has been called "the first emigration." It consisted, according to the most trustworthy statistics, of 1553 persons, equipped with 566 wagons, 2213 oxen, 124 horses, 887 cows, 358 sheep, 35 hogs, and 716 chickens. Pratt had brought back from England 469 sovereigns, collected as tithing, which were used in equipping the first parties for Utah. This company had at its head, as president, Brigham Young's brother John, with P. P. Pratt as chief adviser.

Nothing more serious interrupted the movement of these hundreds of emigrants than dissatisfaction with Pratt, upsets, broken wagons, and the occasional straying of cattle, and all arrived in the valley in the latter part of September, Pratt's division on the 25th.

The company which started on the return trip with Young on August 26 embraced those Apostles who had gone West with him, some others of the pioneers, and most of the members of the Battalion who had joined them, and whose families were still on the banks of the Missouri. The eastward trip was made interesting by the meetings with the successive companies who were on their way to

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the Salt Lake Valley. Early in September some Indians stole 48 of their horses, and ten weeks later 200 Sioux charged their camp, but there was no loss of life.

On the 19th of October the party were met by a mounted company who had left Winter Quarters to offer any aid that might be needed, and were escorted to that camp. They arrived there on October 31, where they were welcomed by their families, and feasted as well as the supplies would permit.

The winter of 1847-1848 was employed by Young and his associates in completing the church organization, mapping out a scheme of European immigration, and preparing for the removal of the remaining Mormons to Salt Lake Valley.

That winter was much milder than its predecessor, and the health of the camps was improved, due, in part, to the better physical condition of their occupants. On the west side of the river, however, troubles had arisen with the Omahas, who complained to the government that the Mormons were killing off the game and depleting their lands of timber. The new-comers were accordingly directed to recross the river, and it was in this way that the camp near Council Bluffs in 1848 secured its principal population. In Mormon letters of that date the name Winter Quarters is sometimes applied to the settlement east of the river generally known as Kaneshville.

The programme then arranged provided for the removal in the spring of 1848 to Salt Lake Valley of practically all Mormons who remained on the Missouri, leaving only enough to look after the crops there and to maintain a forwarding point for emigrants from Europe and the Eastern states. The legislature of Iowa by request organized a county embracing the camps on the east side of the river. There seems to have been an idea in the minds of some of the Mormons that they might effect a permanent settlement in western Iowa. Orson Pratt, in a general epistle to the Saints in Europe, encouraging emigration, dated August 15, 1848, said, "A great, extensive, and rich tract of country has also been, by the providence of God, put in the possession of the Saints in the western borders of Iowa," which the Saints would have the first chance to purchase, at five shillings per acre. A letter from G.

A. Smith and E. T. Benson to O. Pratt, dated December 20 in that year, told of the formation of a company of 860 members to

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enclose an additional tract of 11,000 acres, in shares of from 5 to 80 acres, and of the laying out of two new cities, ten miles north and south. Orson Hyde set up a printing-press there, and for some time published the *Frontier Guardian*. But wiser counsel prevailed, and by 1853 most of the emigrants from Nauvoo had passed on to Utah,¹ and Linforth found Kaneshville in 1853 "very dirty and unhealthy," and full of gamblers, lawyers, and dealers in "bargains," the latter made up principally of the outfits of discouraged immigrants who had given up the trip at that point.

Young himself took charge of the largest body that was to cross the plains in 1848. The preparations were well advanced by the first of May, and on the 24th he set out for Elk Horn (commonly called "The Horn") where the organization of the column was to be made. The travellers were divided into two large companies, the first four "hundreds" comprising 1229 persons and 397 wagons; the second section, led by H. C. Kimball, 662 persons and 226 wagons; and the third, under Elders W. Richards and A. Lyman, about 300 wagons. A census of the first two companies, made by the clerk of the camp, showed that their equipment embraced the following items: horses, 131; mules, 44; oxen, 2012; cows and other cattle, 1317; sheep, 654; pigs, 237; chickens, 904; cats, 54; dogs, 134; goats, 3; geese, 10; ducks, 5; hives of bees, 5; doves, 11; and one squirrel.²

The expense of fitting out these companies was necessarily large, and the heads of the church left at Kaneshville a debt amounting to \$3600, "without any means being provided for its payment."³

President Young's company began its actual westward march on June 5, and the last detachment got away about the 25th. They reached the site of Salt Lake City in September. The incidents of the trip were not more interesting than those of the previous year, and only four deaths

occurred on the way.

¹ On September 21, 1851, the First Presidency sent a letter to the Saints who were still in Iowa, directing them all to come to Salt Lake Valley, and saying: "What are you waiting for? Have you any good excuse for not coming? No. You have all of you unitedly a far better chance than we had when we started as pioneers to find this place." -- *Millennial Star*, Vol. XIV, p. 29.

² *Millennial Star*, Vol. X, p. 319.

³ *Ibid*, Vol. XI, p. 14.

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