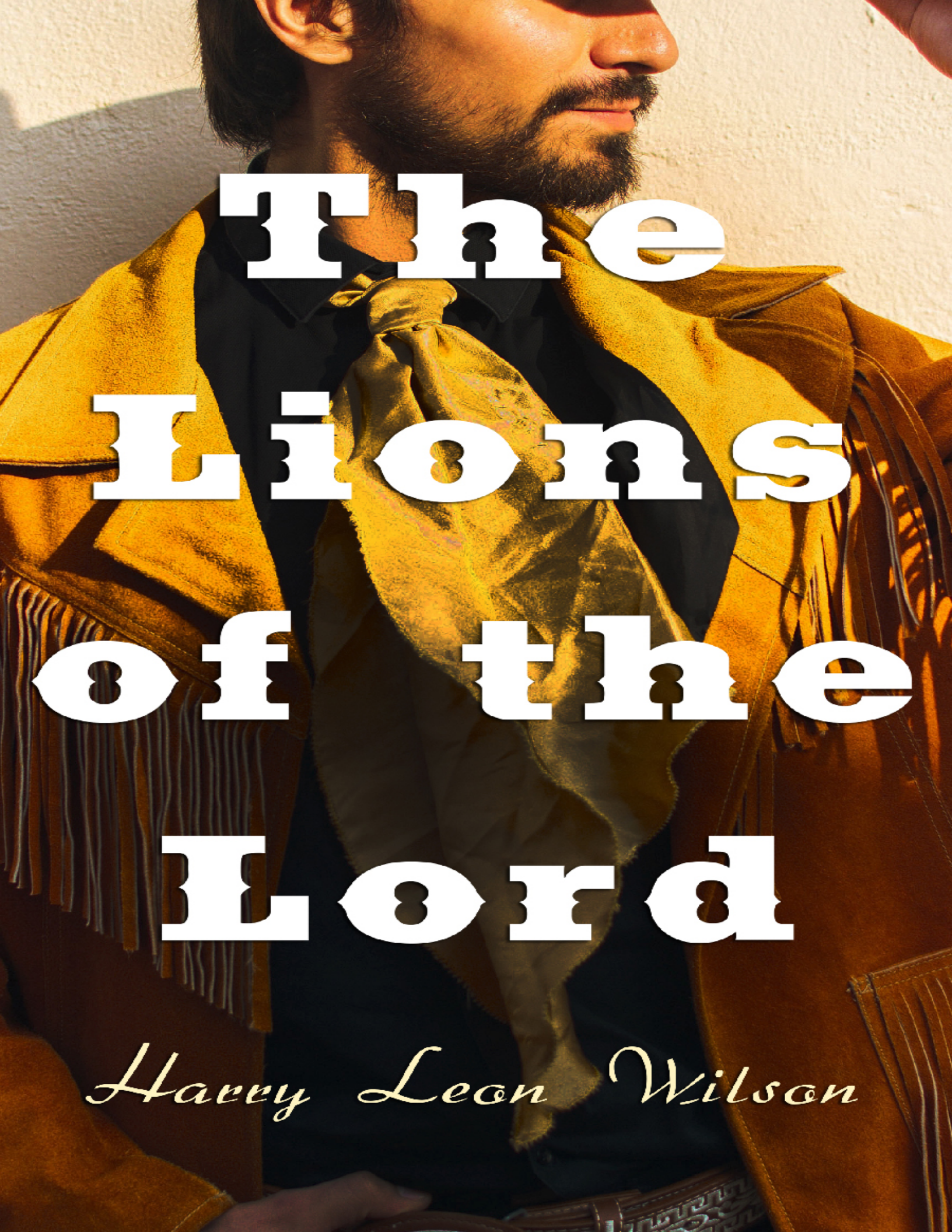
The Lions of the Lord
Harry Leon Wilson

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# The Lions of the Lord

## Western Novel

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# Foreword

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In the days of ’49 seven trails led from our Western frontier into the Wonderland that lay far out under the setting sun and called to the restless. Each of the seven had been blazed mile by mile through the mighty romance of an empire’s founding. Some of them for long stretches are now overgrown by the herbage of the plain; some have faded back into the desert they lined; and more than one has been shod with steel. But along them all flit and brood the memory-ghosts of old, rich-coloured days. To the shout of teamster, the yell of savage, the creaking of tented ox-cart, and the rattle of the swifter mail-coach, there go dim shapes of those who had thrilled to that call of the West;—strong, brave men with the far look in their eyes, with those magic rude tools of the pioneer, the rifle and the axe; women, too, equally heroic, of a stock, fearless, ready, and staunch, bearing their sons and daughters in fortitude; raising them to fear God, to love their country,—and to labour. From the edge of our Republic these valiant ones toiled into the dump of prairie and mountain to live the raw new days and weld them to our history; to win fertile acres from the wilderness and charm the desert to blossoming. And the time of these days and these people, with their tragedies and their comedies, was a time of epic splendour;—more vital with the stuff and colour of life, I think, than any since the stubborn gray earth out there was made to yield its treasure.

Of these seven historic highways the one richest in story is the old Salt Lake Trail: this because at its western end was woven a romance within a romance;—a drama of human passions, of love and hate, of high faith and low, of the beautiful and the ugly, of truth and lies; yet with certain fine

fidelities under it all; a drama so close-knit, so amazingly true, that one who had lightly designed to make a tale there was dismayed by fact. So much more thrilling was it than any fiction he might have imagined, so more than human had been the cunning of the Master Dramatist, that the little make-believe he was pondering seemed clumsy and poor, and he turned from it to try to tell what had really been.

In this story, then, the things that are strangest have most of truth. The make-believe is hardly more than a cement to join the queerly wrought stones of fact that were found ready. For, if the writer has now and again had to divine certain things that did not show,—yet must have been,—surely these are not less than truth. One of these deductions is the Lute of the Holy Ghost who came in the end to be the Little Man of Sorrows: who loved a woman, a child, and his God, but sinned through pride of soul;—whose life, indeed, was a poem of sin and retribution. Yet not less true was he than the Lion of the Lord, the Archer of Paradise, the Wild Ram of the Mountains, or the gaunt, gray woman whom hurt love had crazed. For even now, as the tale is done, comes a dry little note in the daily press telling how such a one actually did the other day a certain brave, great thing it had seemed the imagined one must be driven to do. Only he and I, perhaps, will be conscious of the struggle back of that which was printed; but at least we two shall know that the Little Man of Sorrows is true, even though the cross where he fled to say his last prayer in the body has long since fallen and its bars crumbled to desert dust.

Yet there are others still living in a certain valley of the mountains who will know why the soul-proud youth came to bend under invisible burdens, and why he feared, as an angel of vengeance, that early cowboy with the yellow hair, who came singing down from the high divide into Amalon where a girl was waiting in her dream of a single love; others who, to this day, will do not more than whisper with

averted faces of the crime that brought a curse upon the land; who still live in terror of shapes that shuffle furtively behind them, fumbling sometimes at their shoulders with weak hands, striving ever to come in front and turn upon them. But these will know only one side of the Little Man of Sorrows who was first the Lute of the Holy Ghost in the Poet’s roster of titles: since they have lacked his courage to try the great issue with their God.

New York City, May 1st, 1903.

# Chapter I.
# The Dead City

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The city without life lay handsomely along a river in the early sunlight of a September morning. Death had seemingly not been long upon it, nor had it made any scar. No breach or rent or disorder or sign of violence could be seen. The long, shaded streets breathed the still airs of utter peace and quiet. From the half-circle around which the broad river bent its moody current, the neat houses, set in cool, green gardens, were terraced up the high hill, and from the summit of this a stately marble temple, glittering of newness, towered far above them in placid benediction.

Mile after mile the streets lay silent, along the river-front, up to the hilltop, and beyond into the level; no sound nor motion nor sign of life throughout their length. And when they had run their length, and the outlying fields were reached, there, too, was the same brooding spell as the land stretched away in the hush and haze. The yellow grain, heavy-headed with richness, lay beaten down and rotting, for there were no reapers. The city, it seemed, had died calmly, painlessly, drowsily, as if overcome by sleep.

From a skiff in mid-river, a young man rowing toward the dead city rested on his oars and looked over his shoulder to the temple on the hilltop. There was something very boyish in the reverent eagerness with which his dark eyes rested upon the pile, tracing the splendid lines from its broad, gray base to its lofty spire, radiant with white and gold. As he looked long and intently, the colour of new life flushed into a face that was pinched and drawn. With fresh resolution, he bent again to his oars, noting with a quick eye that the

current had carried him far down-stream while he stopped to look upon the holy edifice.

Landing presently at the wharf, he was stunned by the hush of the streets. This was not like the city of twenty thousand people he had left three months before. In blank bewilderment he stood, turning to each quarter for some solution of the mystery. Perceiving at length that there was really no life either way along the river, he started wonderingly up a street that led from the waterside,—a street which, when he had last walked it, was quickening with the rush of a mighty commerce.

Soon his expression of wonder was darkened by a shade of anxiety. There was an unnerving quality in the trance-like stillness; and the mystery of it pricked him to forebodings. He was now passing empty workshops, hesitating at door after door with ever-mounting alarm. Then he began to call, but the sound of his voice served only to aggravate the silence.

Growing bolder, he tried some of the doors and found them to yield, letting him into a kind of smothered, troubled quietness even more oppressive than that outside. He passed an empty ropewalk, the hemp strewn untidily about, as if the workers had left hurriedly. He peered curiously at idle looms and deserted spinning-wheels—deserted apparently but the instant before he came. It seemed as if the people were fled maliciously just in front, to leave him in this fearfullest of all solitudes. He wondered if he did not hear their quick, furtive steps, and see the vanishing shadows of them.

He entered a carpenter’s shop. On the bench was an unfinished door, a plane left where it had been shoved half the length of its edge, the fresh pine shaving still curling over the side. He left with an uncanny feeling that the carpenter, breathing softly, had watched him from some hiding-place, and would now come stealthily out to push his plane again.

He turned into a baker’s shop and saw freshly chopped kindling piled against the oven, and dough actually on the kneading-tray. In a tanner’s vat he found fresh bark. In a blacksmith’s shop he entered next the fire was out, but there was coal heaped beside the forge, with the ladling-pool and the crooked water-horn, and on the anvil was a horseshoe that had cooled before it was finished.

With something akin to terror, he now turned from this street of shops into one of those with the pleasant dwellings, eager to find something alive, even a dog to bark an alarm. He entered one of the gardens, clicking the gate-latch loudly after him, but no one challenged. He drew a drink from the well with its loud-rattling chain and clumsy, water-sodden bucket, but no one called. At the door of the house he whistled, stamped, pounded, and at last flung it open with all the noise he could make. Still his hungry ears fed on nothing but sinister echoes, the barren husks of his own clamour. There was no curt voice of a man, no quick, questioning tread of a woman. There were dead white ashes on the hearth, and the silence was grimly kept by the dumb household gods.

His nervousness increased. So vividly did his memory people the streets and shops and houses that the air was vibrant with sound,—low-toned conversations, shouts, calls, laughter, the voices of children, the creaking of wagons, pounding hammers, the clangour of many works; yet all muffled away from him, as if coming from some phantom-land. His eyes, too, were kept darting from side to side by vague forms that flitted privily near by, around corners, behind him, lurking always a little beyond his eyes, turn them quickly as he would. Now, facing the street, he shouted, again and again, from sheer nervousness; but the echoes came back alone.

He recalled a favourite day-dream of boyhood,—a dream in which he became the sole person in the world, wandering with royal liberty through strange cities, with no voice to

chide or forbid, free to choose and partake, as would a prince, of all the wonders and delights that boyhood can picture; his own master and the master of all the marvels and treasures of earth. This was like the dream come true; but it distressed him. It was necessary to find the people at once. He had a feeling that his instant duty was to break some malign spell that lay upon the place—or upon himself. For one of them was surely bewitched.

Out he strode to the middle of the street, between two rows of yellowing maples, and there he shouted again and still more loudly to evoke some shape or sound of life, sending a full, high, ringing call up the empty thoroughfare. Between the shouts he scanned the near-by houses intently.

At last, half-way up the next block, even as his lungs filled for another peal, he thought his eyes caught for a short half-second the mere thin shadow of a skulking figure. It had seemed to pass through a grape arbour that all but shielded from the street a house slightly more pretentious than its neighbours. He ran toward the spot, calling as he went. But when he had vaulted over the low fence, run across the garden and around the end of the arbour, dense with the green leaves and clusters of purple grapes, the space in front of the house was bare. If more than a trick-phantom of his eye had been there, it had vanished.

He stood gazing blankly at the front door of the house. Was it fancy that he had heard it shut a second before he came? that his nerves still responded to the shock of its closing? He had already imagined so many noises of the kind, so many misty shapes fleeing before him with little soft rustlings, so many whispers at his back and hushed cries behind the closed doors. Yet this door had seemed to shut more tangibly, with a warmer promise of life. He went quickly up the three wooden steps, turned the knob, and pushed it open—very softly this time. No one appeared. But, as he stood on the threshold, while the pupils of his eyes dilated to the gloom of the hall into which he looked, his

ears seemed to detect somewhere in the house a muffled footfall and the sound of another door closed softly.

He stepped inside and called. There was no answer, but above his head a board creaked. He started up the stairs in front of him, and, as he did so, he seemed to hear cautious steps across a bare floor above. He stopped climbing; the steps ceased. He started up, and the steps came again. He knew now they came from a room at the head of the stairs. He bounded up the remaining steps and pushed open the door with a loud “Halloo!”

The room was empty. Yet across it there was the indefinable trail of a presence,—an odour, a vibration, he knew not what,—and where a bar of sunlight cut the gloom under a half-raised curtain, he saw the motes in the air all astir. Opposite the door he had opened was another, leading, apparently, to a room at the back of the house. From behind it, he could have sworn came the sounds of a stealthily moved body and softened breathing. A presence, unseen but felt, was all about. Not without effort did he conquer the impulse to look behind him at every breath.

Determined to be no longer eluded, he crossed the room on tiptoe and gently tried the opposite door. It was locked. As he leaned against it, almost in a terror of suspense, he knew he heard again those little seemings of a presence a door’s thickness away. He did not hesitate. Still holding the turned knob in his hand, he quickly crouched back and brought his flexed shoulder heavily against the door. It flew open with a breaking sound, and, with a little gasp of triumph, he was in the room to confront its unknown occupant.

To his dismay, he saw no one. He peered in bewilderment to the farther side of the room, where light struggled dimly in at the sides of a curtained window. There was no sound, and yet he could acutely feel that presence; insistently his nerves tingled the warning of another’s nearness. Leaning

forward, still peering to sound the dim corners of the room, he called out again.

Then, from behind the door he had opened, a staggering blow was dealt him, and, before he could recover, or had done more than blindly crook one arm protectingly before his face, he was borne heavily to the floor, writhing in a grasp that centered all its crushing power about his throat.

# Chapter II.
# The Wild Ram of the Mountains

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Slight though his figure was, it was lithe and active and well-muscled, and he knew as they struggled that his assailant was possessed of no greater advantage than had lain in his point of attack. In strength, apparently, they were well-matched. Twice they rolled over on the carpeted floor, and then, despite the big, bony hands pressing about his throat, he turned his burden under him, and all but loosened the killing clutch. This brought them close to the window, but again he was swiftly drawn underneath. Then, as he felt his head must burst and his senses were failing from the deadly grip at his throat, his feet caught in the folds of the heavy curtain, and brought it down upon them in a cloud of dust.

As the light flooded in, he saw the truth, even before his now panting and sneezing antagonist did. Releasing the pressure from his throat with a sudden access of strength born of the new knowledge, he managed to gasp, though thickly and with pain, as they still strove:

“Seth Wright—wait—let go—wait, Seth—I’m Joel—Joel Rae!”

He managed it with difficulty.

“Joel Rae—Rae—Rae—don’t you see?”

He felt the other’s tension relax. With many a panting, puffing “Hey!” and “What’s that now?” he was loosed, and drew himself up into a chair by the saving window. His assailant, a hale, genial-faced man of forty, sat on the floor where the revelation of his victim’s identity had overtaken him. He was breathing hard and feeling tenderly of his neck. This was ruffled ornamentally by a style of whisker much in vogue at the time. It had proved, however, but an inferior

defense against the onslaught of the younger man in his frantic efforts to save his own neck.

They looked at each other in panting amazement, until the older man recovered his breath, and spoke:

“Gosh and all beeswax! The Wild Ram of the Mountains a-settin’ on the Lute of the Holy Ghost’s stomach a-chokin’ him to death. My sakes! I’m a-pantin’ like a tuckered hound—a-thinkin’ he was a cussed milishy mobocrat come to spoil his household!”

The younger man was now able to speak, albeit his breathing was still heavy and the marks of the struggle plain upon him.

“What does it mean, Brother Wright—all this? Where are the Saints we left here—why is the city deserted—and why this—this?”

He shook back the thick, brown hair that fell to his shoulders, tenderly rubbed the livid fingerprints at his throat, and readjusted the collar of his blue flannel shirt.

“Thought you was a milishy man, I tell you, from the careless way you hollered—one of Brockman’s devils come back a-snoopin’, and I didn’t crave trouble, but when I saw the Lord appeared to reely want me to cope with the powers of darkness, why, I jest gritted into you for the consolation of Israel. You’d ’a’ got your come-uppance, too, if you’d ’a’ been a mobber. You was nigh a-ceasin’ to breathe, Joel Rae. In another minute I wouldn’t ’a’ give the ashes of a rye-straw for your part in the tree of life!”

“Yes, yes, man, but go back a little. Where are our people, the sick, the old, and the poor, that we had to leave till now? Tell me, quick.”

The older man sprang up, the late struggle driven from his mind, his face scowling. He turned upon his questioner.

“Does my fury swell up in me? No wonder! And you hain’t guessed why? Well, them pitiful remnant of Saints, the sick, the old, the poor, waitin’ to be helped yender to winter

quarters, has been throwed out into that there slough acrost the river, six hundred and forty of ’em.”

“When we were keeping faith by going?”

“What does a mobocrat care for faith-keepin’? Have you brought back the wagons?”

“Yes; they’ll reach the other side to-night. I came ahead and made the lower crossing. I’ve seen nothing and heard nothing. Go on—tell me—talk, man!”

“Talk?—yes, I’ll talk! We’ve had mobs and the very scum of hell to boil over here. This is Saturday, the 19th, ain’t it? Well, Brockman marched against this stronghold of Israel jest a week ago, with eight hundred men. They had cannons and demanded surrender. We was a scant two hundred fightin’ men, and the only artillery we had was what we made ourselves. We broke up an old steamboat shaft and bored out the pieces so’s they’d take a six-pound shot—but we wasn’t goin’ to give up. We’d learned our lesson about mobocrat milishies. Well, Brockman, when he got our defy, sent out his Warsaw riflemen as flankers on the right and left, put the Lima Guards to our front with one cannon, and marched his main body through that corn-field and orchard to the south of here to the city lines. Then we had it hot. Brockman shot away all his cannon-balls—he had sixty-one—and drew back while he sent to Quincy for more. He’d killed three of our men. Sunday and Monday we swopped a few shots. And then Tuesday, along comes a committee of a hundred to negotiate peace. Well, Wednesday evening they signed terms, spite of all I could do. *I’d* ’a’ fought till the white crows come a-cawin’, but the rest of ’em wasn’t so het up with the Holy Ghost, I reckon. Anyway, they signed. The terms wasn’t reely set till Thursday morning, but we knew they would be, and so all Wednesday night we was movin’ acrost the river, and it kept up all next day,—day before yesterday. You’d ought to ’a’ been here then; you wouldn’t wonder at my comin’ down on you like a thousand of brick jest now, takin’ you for a mobocrat. You’d ’a’ seen families

druv right out of their homes, with no horses, tents, money, nor a day's provisions,—jest a little foolish household stuff they could carry in their hands,—sick men and women carried on beds, mothers luggin' babies and leadin' children. My sakes! but I did want to run some bullets and fill my old horn with powder for the consolation of Israel! They're lyin' out over there in the slough now, as many as ain't gone to glory. It made me jest plumb murderous!"

The younger man uttered a sharp cry of anguish. "What, oh, what has been our sin, that we must be proved again? Why have we got to be chastened?"

"Then Brockman's force marched in Thursday afternoon, and hell was let loose. His devils have plundered the town, thrown out the bedridden that jest couldn't move, thrown their goods out after 'em, burned, murdered, tore up. You come up from the river, and you ain't seen that yet—they ain't touched the lower part of town—and now they're bunkin' in the temple, defacin' it, defilin' it,—that place we built to be a house of rest for the Lord when he cometh again. They drove me acrost the river yesterday, and promised to shoot me if I dast show myself again. I sneaked over in a skiff last night and got here to get my two pistols and some money and trinkets we'd hid out. I was goin' to cross again to-night and wait for you and the wagons."

"My God! and this is the nineteenth century in a land of liberty!"

"State of Illinois, U.S.A., September 19, 1846—but what of that? We're the Lord's chosen, and over yender is a generation of vipers warned to flee from the wrath to come. But they won't flee, and so we're outcasts for the present, driven forth like snakes. The best American blood is in our veins. We're Plymouth Rock stock, the best New England graft; the fathers of nine tenths of us was at Bunker Hill or Valley Forge or Yorktown, but what of that, I ask you?"

The speaker became oratorical as his rage grew.

“What did Matty Van Buren say to Sidney Rigdon and Elias Higbee when they laid our cause before him at Washington after our Missouri persecutions—when the wicked hatred of them Missourians had as a besom of fire swept before it into exile the whipped and plundered Saints of Jackson County? Well, he said: ‘Gentlemen, your cause is just, but I can do nothing for you.’ That’s what a President of the United States said to descendants of *Mayflower* crossers who’d been foully dealt with, and been druv from their substance and their homes, their wheat burned in the stack and in the shock, and themselves butchered or put into the wilderness. And now the Lord’s word to this people is to gether out again.”

The younger man had listened in deep dejection.

“Yes, it’s to be the old story. I saw it coming. The Lord is proving us again. But surely this will be the last. He will not again put us through fire and blood.”

He paused, and for a moment his quick brown eyes looked far away.

“And yet, do you know, Bishop, I’ve thought that he might mean us to save ourselves against this Gentile persecution. Sometimes I find it hard to control myself.”

The Bishop grinned appreciatively.

“So I heer’d. The Lute of the Holy Ghost got too rambunctious back in the States on the subject of our wrongs. And so they called you back from your mission?”

“They said I must learn to school myself; that I might hurt the cause by my ill-tempered zeal—and yet I brought in many—”

“I don’t blame you. I got in trouble the first and only mission I went on, and the first time I preached, at that. When I said, ‘Joseph was ordained by Peter, James, and John,’ a drunken wag in the audience got up and called me a damned liar. I started for him. I never reached him, but I reached the end of my mission right there. The Twelve decided I was usefuller here at home. They said I hadn’t got

enough of the Lord's humility for outside work. That was why they put me at the head of—that little organisation I wanted you to join last spring. And it's done good work, too. You'll join now fast enough, I guess. You begin to see the need of such doin's. I can give you the oath any time."

"No, Bishop, I didn't mean that kind of resistance. It sounded too practical for me; I'm still satisfied to be the Lute of the Holy Ghost."

"You can be a Son of Dan, too."

"Not yet, not yet. We must still be a little meek in the face of Heaven."

"You're in a mighty poor place to practise meekness. What'd you cross the river for, anyway?"

"Why, for father and mother, of course. They must be safe at Green Plains. Can I get out there without trouble?"

The Bishop sneered.

"Be meek, will you? Well, mosey out to Green Plains and begin there. It's a *burned* plains you'll find, and Lima and Morley all the same, and Bear Creek. The mobbers started out from Warsaw, and burned all in their way, Morley first, then Green Plains, Bear Creek, and Lima. They'd set fire to the houses and drive the folks in ahead. They killed Ed Durfee at Morley for talkin' back to 'em."

"But father and mother, surely—"

"Your pa and ma was druv in here with the rest, like cattle to the slaughter."

"You don't mean to say they're over there on the river bank?"

"Now, they are a kind of a mystery about that—why they wa'n't throwed out with the rest. Your ma's sick abed—she ain't ever been peart since the night your pa's house was fired and they had to walk in—but that ain't the reason they wa'n't throwed out. They put out others sicker. They flung families where every one was sick out into that slough. I guess what's left of 'em wouldn't be a supper-spell for a bunch of long-billed mosquitoes. But one of them milishy

captains was certainly partial to your folks for some reason. They was let to stay in Phin Daggin's house till you come."

"And Prudence—the Corsons—Miss Prudence Corson?"

"Oh, ho! So she's the one, is she? Now that reminds me, mebbe I can guess the cute of that captain's partiality. That girl's been kind of lookin' after your pa and ma, and that same milishy captain's been kind of lookin' after the girl. She got him to let her folks go to Springfield."

"But that's the wrong way."

"Well, now, I don't want to spleen, but I never did believe Vince Corson was anything more'n a hickory Saint—and there's been a lot of talk—but you get yours from the girl. If I ain't been misled, she's got some ready for you."

"Bishop, will there be a way for us to get into the temple, for her to be sealed to me? I've looked forward to that, you know. It would be hard to miss it."

"The mob's got the temple, even if you got the girl. There's a verse writ in charcoal on the portal:—

"'Large house, tall steeple,
Silly priests, deluded people.'

"That's how it is for the temple, and the mob's bunked there. But the girl may have changed her mind, too."

The young man's expression became wistful and gentle, yet serenely sure.

"I guess you never knew Prudence at all well," he said. "But come, can't we go to them? Isn't Phin Daggin's house near?"

"You may git there all right. But I don't want *my* part taken out of the tree of life jest yet. I ain't aimin' to show myself none. Hark!"

From outside came the measured, swinging tramp of men.

"Come see how the Lord is proving us—and step light."

They tiptoed through the other rooms to the front of the house.

“There’s a peek-hole I made this morning—take it. I’ll make me one here. Don’t move the curtain.”

They put their eyes to the holes and were still. The quick, rhythmic, scuffling tread of feet drew nearer, and a company of armed men marched by with bayonets fixed. The captain, a handsome, soldierly young fellow, glanced keenly from right to left at the houses along the line of march.

“We’re all right,” said the Bishop, in low tones. “The cusses have been here once—unless they happened to see us. They’re startin’ in now down on the flat to make sure no poor sick critter is left in bed in any of them houses. Now’s your chance if you want to git up to Daggin’s. Go out the back way, follow up the alleys, and go in at the back when you git there. But remember, ‘Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path that biteth the horse heels, so that his rider shall fall backward!’ In Clay County we had to eat up the last mule from the tips of his ears to the end of the fly-whipper. Now we got to pass through the pinches again. We can’t stand it for ever.”

“The spirit may move us against it, Brother Seth.”

“I wish to hell it would!” replied the Bishop.

# Chapter III.
# The Lute of the Holy Ghost Breaks His Fast

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In his cautious approach to the Daggin house, he came upon her unawares—a slight, slender, shapely thing of pink and golden flame, as she poised where the sun came full upon her. One hand clutched her flowing blue skirts snugly about her ankles; the other opened coaxingly to a kitten crouched to spring on the limb of an apple-tree above her. The head was thrown back, the vivid lips were parted, and he heard her laugh low to herself. Near by was a towering rose-bush, from which she had broken the last red rose, large, full, and lush, its petals already loosened. Now she wrenched away a handful of these, and flung them upward at the watchful kitten. The scarlet flecks drifted back around her and upon her. Like little red butterflies hovering in golden sunlight, they lodged in her many-braided yellow hair, or fluttered down the long curls that hung in front of her ears. She laughed again under the caressing shower. Then she tore away the remaining petals and tossed them up with an elf-like daintiness, not at the crouched and expectant kitten this time, but so that the whole red rain floated tenderly down upon her upturned face and into the folds of the white kerchief crossed upon her breast. She waited for the last feathery petal. Her hidden lover saw it lodge in the little hollow at the base of her bare, curved throat. He could hold no longer.

Stepping from the covert that had shielded him, he called softly to her.

“Prudence—Prue!”

She had reached again for the kitten, but at the sound of his low, vigorous note, she turned quickly toward him, colouring with a glow that spread from the corner of the crossed kerchief up to the yellow hair above her brow. She answered with quick breaths.

“Joel—Joel—Joel!”

She laughed aloud, clapping her small hands, and he ran to her—over beds of marigolds, heartsease, and lady’s-slippers, through a row of drowsy-looking, heavy-headed dahlias, and past other withering flowers, all but choked out by the rank garden growths of late summer. Then his arms opened and seemed to swallow the leaping little figure, though his kisses fell with hardly more weight upon the yielded face than had the rose-petals a moment since, so tenderly mindful was his ardour. She submitted, a little as the pampered kitten had before submitted to her own pettings.

“You dear old sobersides, you—how gaunt and careworn you look, and how hungry, and what wild eyes you have to frighten one with! At first I thought you were a crazy man.”

He held her face up to his eager eyes, having no words to say, overcome by the joy that surged through him like a mighty rush of waters. In the moment’s glorious certainty he rested until she stirred nervously under his devouring look, and spoke.

“Come, kiss me now and let me go.”

He kissed her eyes so that she shut them; then he kissed her lips—long—letting her go at last, grudgingly, fearfully, unsatisfied.

“You scare me when you look that way. You mustn’t be so fierce.”

“I told him he didn’t know you.”

“Who didn’t know me, sir?”

“A man who said I wasn’t sure of you.”

“So you *are* sure of me, are you, Mr. Preacherman? Is it because we’ve been sweethearts since so long? But

remember you've been much away. I've seen you—let me count—but one little time of two weeks in three years. You *would* go on that horrid mission."

"Is not religion made up of obedience, let life or death come?"

"Is there no room for loving one's sweetheart in it?"

"One must obey, and I am a better man for having denied myself and gone. I can love you better. I have been taught to think of others. I was sent to open up the gospel in the Eastern States because I had been endowed with almost the open vision. It was my call to help in the setting up of the Messiah's latter-day kingdom. Besides, we may never question the commands of the holy priesthood, even if our wicked hearts rebel in secret."

"If you had questioned the right person sharply enough, you might have had an answer as to why you were sent."

"What do you mean? How could I have questioned? How could I have rebelled against the stepping-stone of my exaltation?"

His face relaxed a little, and he concluded almost quizzically:

"Was not Satan hurled from high heaven for resisting authority?"

She pouted, caught him by the lapels of his coat and prettily tried to shake him.

"There—horrid!—you're preaching again. Please remember you're not on mission now. Indeed, sir, you were called back for being too—too—why, do you know, even old Elder Munsel, 'Fire-brand Munsel,' they call him, said you were too fanatical."

His face grew serious.

"I'm glad to be called back to you, at any rate,—and yet, think of all those poor benighted infidels who believe there are no longer revelations nor prophecies nor gifts nor healings nor speaking with tongues,—this miserable generation so blind in these last days when the time of

God’s wrath is at hand. Oh, I burn in my heart for them, night after night, suffering for the tortures that must come upon them—thrice direful because they have rejected the message of Moroni and trampled upon the priesthood of high heaven, butchering the Saints of the Most High, and hunting the prophets of God like Ahab of old.”

“Oh, dear, please stop it! You sound like swearing!” Her two hands were closing her ears in a pretty pretense.

He seemed hardly to hear her, but went on excitedly:

“Yet I have done what man could do. I am never done doing. I would gladly give my body to be burned a thousand times if it would avail to save them into the Kingdom. I have preached the word tirelessly—fanatically, they say—but only as it burned in my bones. I have told them of visions, dreams, revelations, miracles, and all the mercies of this last dispensation. And I have prayed and fasted. Just now coming from winter quarters, when I could not preach, I held twelve fasts and twelve vigils. You will say it has weakened me, but it has weakened only the bonds that the flesh puts upon the spirit. Even so, I fell short of my vision—my tabernacle of flesh must have been too much profaned, though how I cannot dream—believe me, I have kept myself as high and clean as I knew. Yet there was promise. For only last night at the river bank, the spirit came partially upon me. I was taken with a faintness, and I heard above my head a sound like the rustling of silken robes, and the spirit of God hovered over me, so that I could feel its radiance. All in good time, then, it shall dwell within me, so that I may know a way to save the worthy.”

He grasped her wrist and bent eagerly forward, with the same wild look in his eyes that had before disquieted her.

“Mark what I say now—I shall do great works for this generation; I am strangely favoured of God; I have felt the spirit quicken wondrously within me, and I know the Lord works not in vain; what great wonder of grace I shall do, what miracle of salvation, I know not, but remember, it shall

be transcendent; tell it to no one, but I know in my inner secret heart it shall be a greater work than man hath yet done."

He stopped and drew himself up, shaking his head, as if to shrug off the spell of his own feeling.

"Now, now! stop it at once, and come to the house. I've been tending your father and mother, and I'm going to tend you. What you need directly is food. Your look may be holy, but I prefer full cheeks. Not another word until you have eaten every crumb I put before you."

With an air of captor, daintily fierce, she led him toward the house and up to the door, which she pushed open before him.

"Come softly, your mother may be still asleep—no, your father is talking—listen!"

A querulous voice, rough with strong feeling, came from the inner room.

"Here, I tell you, is the prophecy of Joseph to prove it, away back in 1832: 'Verily thus saith the Lord concerning the wars that will shortly come to pass, beginning at the rebellion of South Carolina, which will terminate in the death and misery of many souls. The days will come that war will be poured out upon all nations, beginning at that place; for behold, the Southern States shall be divided against the Northern States, and the Southern States will call on other nations, even the nation of Great Britain, as it is called.' Now will you doubt again, mother? For persecuting the Saints of the most high God, this republic shall be dashed to pieces like a potter's vessel. But we shall be safe. The Lord will gather Israel home to the chambers of the mountains against the day of wrath that is coming on the Gentile world. For all flesh hath corrupted itself on the face of the earth, but the Saints shall possess a purified land, upon which there shall be no curse when the Lord cometh. Then shall the heavens open—"

He broke off, for the girl came leading in the son, who, as soon as he saw the white-haired old man with his open book, sitting beside the wasted woman on the bed, flew to them with a glad cry.

They embraced him and smoothed and patted him, tremulously, feebly, with broken thanks for his safe return. The mother at last fell back upon her pillow, her eyes shining with the joy of a great relief, while the father was seized with a fit of coughing that cruelly racked his gaunt frame and left him weak but smiling.

The girl had been placing food upon the table.

“Come, Joel,” she urged, “you must eat—we have all breakfasted, so you must sit alone, but we shall watch you.”

She pushed him into the chair and filled his plate, in spite of his protests.

“Not another word until you have eaten it all.”

“The very sight of it is enough. I am not hungry.”

But she coaxed and commanded, with her hands upon his shoulders, and he let himself be persuaded to taste the bread and meat. After a few mouthfuls, taken with obvious disrelish, she detected the awakening fervour of a famished man, and knew she would have to urge no more.

As the son ate, the girl busied herself at the mother’s pillow, while the father talked and ruminated by intervals,—a text, a word of cheer to the wasted mother, incidents of old days, memories of early revivals. In 1828, he had hailed Dylkes, the “Leatherwood God,” as the real Messiah. Then he had been successively a Freewill Baptist, a Winebrennerian, a Universalist, a Disciple, and finally an eloquent and moving preacher in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Now he was a wild-eyed old dreamer with a high, narrow forehead depressed at the temples, enfeebled, living much in the past. Once his voice would be low, as if he spoke only to himself; again it would rise in warning to an evil generation.

“The end of the world is at hand, laddie,” he began, after looking fondly at his son for a time. “Joseph said there are those now living who shall not taste of death till Jesus comes. And then, oh, then—the great white day! There is strong delusion among the wicked in the day in which we live, but the seed of Abraham, the royal seed, the blessed seed of the Lord, shall be told off to its separate glory. The Lord will spread the curtains of Zion and gather it out to the fat valleys of Ephraim, and there, with resurrected bodies it shall possess the purified earth. I shall be away for a time before then, laddie—and the dear mother here. Our crowns have been earned and will not long be withheld. But you will be there for the glory of it, and who more deserves it?”

“I pray to be made worthy of the exaltation, Father.”

“You are, laddie. The word and the light came to me when I preached another faith—for the spirit of Thomas Campbell had aforetime moved me—but you, laddie, you have been bred in the word and the truth. The Lord, as a mark of his favour, has kept you from the contamination of doubters, infidels, heretics, and apostates. You have been educated under the care of the priesthood, close here in Nauvoo the Beautiful, and who could more deserve the fulness of thrones, dominions, and of power—who of all those whose number the after-time shall unfold?”

He turned appealingly to the mother, whose fevered eyes rested fondly upon her boy as she nodded confirmation of the words.

“Did he not march all the way from Kirtland to Missouri with us in ’34—the youngest soldier in the whole army of Zion? How old, laddie?—twelve, was it?—so he marched a hundred miles for every one of his little years—and so valiant—none more so—begging us to hasten and give battle so he could fight upon the Lord’s side. Twelve hundred miles he walked to put back in their homes the persecuted Saints of Jackson County. But, ah! There he saw liberty strangled in her sanctuary. Do you mind, laddie, how

in ’38 we were driven by the mob from Jackson across the river into Clay County? how they ran off our cattle, stole our grain? how your poor old mother’s mother died from exposure that night in the rain and sleet? how we lived on mast and corn, the winter, in tents and a few dugouts and rickety huts—we who had the keys of St. Peter and the gifts of the apostolic age? Do you mind the sackings and burnings at Adam-Ondi-Ahman? Do you mind the wife of Joseph’s brother, Don Carlos, she that was made by the soldiers to wade Grand River with two helpless babes in her arms? They would not even let her warm herself, before she started, at the flames of her own hut they had fired. And, laddie, you mind Haun’s mill. Ah, the bloody day!—you were there, and one other, the sister, happy, beautiful as her in the Song of Songs, when the brutes came—”

“Don’t, father—stop there—you are making my throat shut against the food.”

“Then you came to Far West in time to see Joseph and his brethren sold to the mobocrats by that devil’s traitor, Hinkle,—you saw the fleeing Saints forced to leave their all, hunted out of Missouri into Illinois—their houses burned, the cattle stolen, their wives and daughters—”

“Don’t, father! Be quiet again. You and mother must be fit for our journey, as fit as we younger folk.”

He glanced fondly across the table, where the girl had leaned her chin in her hands to watch him, speculatively. She avoided his eyes.

“Yes, yes,” assented the old man, “and you know of our persecutions here—how we had to finish the temple with our arms by our sides, even as the faithful finished the walls of Jerusalem—and how we were driven out by night—”

“Quiet, father!”

“Yes, yes. Ah, this gathering out! How far shall we go, laddie?”

“Four hundred miles to winter quarters. From there no one yet knows,—a thousand, maybe two thousand.”

“Aye, to the Rockies or beyond, even to the Pacific. Joseph prophesied it—where we shall be left in peace until the great day.”

The young man glanced quickly up.

“Or have time to grow mighty, if we should not be let alone. Surely this is the last time the Lord would have us meek under the mob.”

“Ho, ho! As you were twelve years ago, trudging by my side, valiant to fight if the Lord but wills it! But have no fear, boy. This time we go far beyond all that may tempt the spoiler. We go into the desert, where no humans are but the wretched red Lamanites; no beasts but the wild ones of four feet to hunger for our flesh; no verdure, no nourishment to sustain us save the manna from on high,—a region of unknown perils and unnamed deserts. Truly we make the supreme test. I do not overcolour it. Prudence, hand me yonder scrap-book, there on the secretary. Here I shall read you the words of no less a one than Senator Daniel Webster on the floor of the Senate but a few months agone. He spoke on the proposal to fix a mail-route from Missouri to the mouth of the Columbia River in that far-off land. Hear this great man who knows whereof he speaks. He is very bitter. ‘What do we want with this vast, worthless area—this region of savages and wild beasts, of deserts, of shifting sands and whirlwinds of dust, of cactus and prairie-dogs? To what use could we ever hope to put these great deserts or those endless mountain ranges, impenetrable and covered to their very base with eternal snows? What can we ever hope to do with that Western coast, a coast of three thousand miles, rock-bound, cheerless, uninviting, and not a harbour on it. Mr. President, I will never vote one cent from the public treasury to place the Pacific Coast one inch nearer to Boston than it now is!’”

The girl had been making little impatient flights about the room, as if awaiting an opportunity to interrupt the old