

TALE OF THE OLD WEST

BY HARRY LEON WILSON

CHAPTER XVIII.—Continued.

Joel Rae found himself believing that he could now have been a Herder of the Lord (the High Priest) as he would have fought, while Brigham was stooping to petty stratagems as if God were needing to rely upon deceit.

Late in June the army of Johnston emancipated Emigration Canyon, passed through the streets of Brigham City and camped on the River Jordan. But to the deep despair of one observer, these invaders committed no depredation or overt act. After fighting in offensively two days on the Jordan, they marched 40 miles south to Cedar Valley, where Camp Floyd was established.

Thus, no one fully comprehending how it had come about, peace was soon definitely to have been restored. The people from Brigham City had been offered a free pardon for all past treasons and seditions if they would return to their allegiance to the Federal government; the new officers of the Territory were installed, sons of perdition in the seats of the Lord's equity, and sermons of warning were preached. Uncle Sam ceased for the moment to resemble in the tabernacle. Early in July, Brigham ordered the people to return to their homes. The people were led there as a sacrifice, even as Abraham had offered Isaac, and as the Lord had caught them a timely rain in the thicket.

In the midst of the general rejoicing, Joel Rae was overwhelmed with demoralization and despair. Off to the south was the desert. There he could be alone; there face God and his own conscience and have God himself declare the truth about himself. In his sadness, he had come to like the people with him; then they were away from some evil, he knew not what, but he knew not how it had come, and he knew not how it would be. He had been offered a free pardon for all past treasons and seditions if they would return to their allegiance to the Federal government; the new officers of the Territory were installed, sons of perdition in the seats of the Lord's equity, and sermons of warning were preached. Uncle Sam ceased for the moment to resemble in the tabernacle. Early in July, Brigham ordered the people to return to their homes. The people were led there as a sacrifice, even as Abraham had offered Isaac, and as the Lord had caught them a timely rain in the thicket.

He pressed forward again toward the desert, eager to be alone with it. The page with the wash of the desert across it seemed to take on a new vividness in the stronger light. Under the stars the brightening of the night was manifested before his mind. "And as we would that men should look to you," it seemed to him that he heard the words which he had heard in the words so that they burned his eyes.

An hour after daybreak the trail led him toward the foot of the hills, a watercourse to the edge of the desert. Along the sides of the chaparral grew thickly, and the spring by which he had found the trail was green at the edge of the gray. But out in front of him was the infinite stretch of death, far sweeps of wind-furrowed and swirling sand, and the sun melted by the clouds of fine dust in the air. Sparsely over the dull surface grew the few shrubs that could survive the heat and dryness of the unlovely thicket of burr, spine, thorn, or saw-edged leaf—all bent one way by the sand blown against them—bristling, chattering and crouching nestle bushes.

In the vast open of the blue above, a vulture wheeled with sinister alertness, and far out among the waving, growing things a coyote skulked knowingly. The world, phantom-like beauty of it stood upon him, torn as he was, while he looked over the dry, fat reaches. It was a good place to die in, this lifeless waste languishing under an angry sun.

At last he gave his horse water, tied the bridler to the horn of the saddle, headed him back over the trail to the valley and turned him loose. Then, after a long and lonely waiting, the green of the hills, he started off through the yielding sand, his face white and haggard but hard-set. He was already weakened by fasting and loss of sleep, and the heat and dryness stood upon him as the chill was when he awoke this morning at the camp. When he had walked the hour, he felt he must stop, at least to rest. He looked back to see how far he had come, and he was disappointed by the green of the hills, that he wanted a stone's throw away. If delirium came now he would probably wander back to the water, and he would not be able to walk toward the valley.

He walked another hour, then turned, and was again disappointed—it was such a little distance, yet he knew now he must be too far out and his way back would be a long one of contentment that he lay down to rest or to take what might come.

He was as quiet as he could be since the long night on the river had crossed from Nauvoo had torn wet his eyes. They fell now, and from sheer helplessness cried he out. And when the first time in two days he prayed—this time the prayer of the publican—

"God be merciful to me, a sinner." Over and over he said the words, chokingly, watering the hot sands with his tears. When the paroxysm of supplication left him, he was prone, still faintly crying his prayer into the sand, "O God, be merciful to me, a sinner."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

became uneasy and frightened at last, under his scrutiny, and when the woman's blue dress held her from running away, began to cry, so that he gave the word to let her go. She ran quickly into the other room of the cabin, and he followed her with tears of indignation in her voice. "You're not my papa—not my real papa!"

As the people were asleep, he sat before the blaze in the big fireplace, on the hearth clearly swept with the turkey-wing and buffaloeskins. There was to be one more night of his reprieve from solitude. The three women of the house and the man were sleeping around the room as usual. The child's bed had been placed near him on the floor after she slept, as he had asked it to be. He had no thought of sleep for himself. He was too intensely awake with apprehension. On the floor beside his chair was a little bundle the woman had brought him—the bundle he had found lashed by her side, that day with the trinkets scattered about and the limpbacked little lying open where it had fallen.

He picked the bundle up and unfastened it, touching the contents timidly. He had no thought of sleep for himself. He was too intensely awake with apprehension. On the floor beside his chair was a little bundle the woman had brought him—the bundle he had found lashed by her side, that day with the trinkets scattered about and the limpbacked little lying open where it had fallen.

CHAPTER XX.

The Picture in the Sky.

If something of the peace of the night silence came to him as he rode, it faded and he was left to wonder and despair. He knew now that he had been cheated of all his hopes, and he was left to wonder and despair. He knew now that he had been cheated of all his hopes, and he was left to wonder and despair.

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