

CHAPTER XI.

“DIVINE EMIGRATION.”—THE PROPHET AND THE HAND-CART SCHEME.

Early Emigration to Utah.—The Prophet Meditates Economy.—The “Divine Plan” Invented.—How it was Revealed to the Saints.—They Prepare to “Gather to Zion.”—How the Hand-Carts were Built.—The Sufferings of the Emigrants.—On Board Ship.—An Apostolic Quarrel.—Base Conduct of the Apostle Taylor.—The Saints arrive in Iowa City.—How the Summer-time was Wasted.—Beginning a Terrible Journey.—Suffering by the Way.—“Going Cheep.”—They reach Council Bluffs.—Levi Savage Behaves Bravely.—Lying Prophecy of the Apostle Richards.—How the Emigrants were Deceived.—Brigham Young sends help to Them.—Two Apostles are Denounced.—The Prophet in a Fix.—He lays His own Sins on the Backs of Others.—Preparing to Receive the Emigrants.

IN the history of any people there has never been recorded a case of such gross mismanagement as that of gathering the foreign Saints to Zion in the 1856.

Until this disastrous year the emigrants had always made the journey across the plains with ox-teams, under the charge of some of the returning elders, who were triumphantly bringing the fruits of their labors in foreign vineyards to garner them in Zion. The able-bodied walked, and those who were too young, too old, or too feeble to perform the journey on foot, went in the



201 THE “DIVINE” EMIGRATION SCHEME.

wagons with the baggage. It was in the same way that the Saints themselves made their first journey across the plains, and in the proper season of the year was a safe

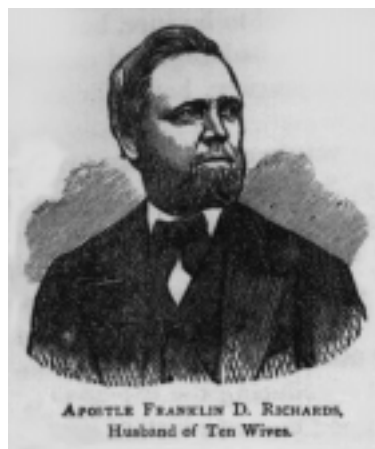
and a pleasant journey. Tedious and wearisome, to be sure, but in no way perilous, as plenty of provisions, bedding, and clothing could be carried, not only for the journey, but sufficient to last some time after the arrival.

The cost of emigration in this way was from £10 to £12, English money, or nominally \$50 to \$60 in gold—not very expensive, surely, for a journey from Liverpool to Salt Lake City; but to Brigham, in one of his fits of economy, it seemed altogether too costly, and he set to work to devise some means for retrenchment. During the entire winter of 1855-56, he and his chief supporters were in almost constant consultation on the subject of reducing the expenses of emigration, and they finally hit upon the expedient of having them cross the plains with hand-carts, wheeling their own provisions and baggage, and so saving the expense of teams. The more Brigham thought of his plan, the more in love he grew with it, and he sent detailed instructions concerning it to the Apostle Franklin D. Richards, the Mormon agent at Liverpool, who published it in the *“Millennial Star,”* as the new “divine plan” revealed to Brother Brigham by the Lord, whose will it was that the journey should be made in this manner.

My father was in England when the “command of the Lord concerning them” was given to the gathering Saints, and their enthusiastic devotion and instant acceptance of the revelation showed how entirely they entrusted themselves to the leadership of their superiors in the church, implicitly believing them to be inspired of God. They were told by Richards, in the magazine, and by their missionaries in their addresses, that they should meet many difficulties,—that trials would be strewn along their path, and occasional dangers meet them—but that the Lord’s chosen people were to be a tried people, and that they should come out

202 PREPARING FOR THE PLIGRIMIAGE.

unscathed, and enter Zion with great triumph and rejoicing, coming out from the world as by great tribulation; that the Lore would hold them in special charge, and they need not fear terror by night nor pestilence that walketh at noonday, for they should not so much as hurt a foot against a stone.



It was represented to them that they were specially privileged and honored in

thus being called by the Lord to be the means of showing His power and revealing glory to a world lying in darkness and overwhelmed with guilt, deserted by God and given over to destruction. Considering the class of people from whom most of the converts were made, it is not at all strange that all this talk should impress their imagination and arouse their enthusiasm. Emotion, instead of reason, guided them almost entirely, and they grew almost ecstatic over the new way in which they were called to Zion.

The United States government was beginning to trouble itself a little about Utah; and in order to make the church as strong as possible, in case of an invasion, Brigham was anxious to increase the number of emigrants, and requested Apostle Richards to send as many as he could. To do this, the elders counseled all the emigrants, who had more money than they needed, to deposit it with the Apostle Richards for the purpose of assisting the poor to Zion. The call was instantly and gladly obeyed, and the number of Saints bound Zion-ward was thereby nearly doubled. In the face of the disaster which attended it, it has been the boast of some of the missionaries and elders that this way

203 BRIGHAM SUMMONS THE SAINTS.

the largest number that ever was sent over at one time. So much greater, then, is the weight of responsibility which rests upon the souls of those who originated and carried out this selfish design, made more selfish, more cruel, and more terribly culpable for the hypocrisy and deceit which attended it from its conception to its disastrous close.

Great, however, as was the number of emigrants who that year crossed the plains to Utah, as many, if not more, have, during various seasons since then, traversed the same route; although, of course, for obvious reasons, it is difficult to give approximate statistics. During the summer of 1862—the same year in which Eliza Snow and Geo. A. Smith, the fattest of all fat apostles, together with a select company of Saints, wandered off to the Holy Land in order to bring it within the dominions of Brigham—it was said that more Mormons were landed at Castle Gardens [Note: Castle Gardens, New York—the immigration port at that time] than in any other year. I cannot say whether this is true; but it is a fact that only a few weeks ago seven or eight hundred were landed in New York, and every few weeks, all through the summer, other ship-loads will arrive.

On the 14th of March, 1856, my father, who was at Sheffield, England, engaged in missionary work, received a telegram from Richards, telling him to come at once to Liverpool for the purpose of taking passage for America in the mail-packet Canada, which was to sail for Boston on the 15th. He had no time to say goodbye to his friends, but

made his preparations hurriedly, and left Sheffield as soon as possible. On arriving at Liverpool and consulting with Richards, he learned that he had been sent for his part of the work was to be performed in the United States. He, being a practical wagon-maker, was to oversee the building of the carts. In twenty-four hours after the receipt of the telegram—his first intimation that he was to be called home—he was on his way. The passage was unusually rough,

204 “APOSTLES” EMBEZZLE THE FUNDS.

and he was glad enough to see the shores of America after tossing about on the ocean for fifteen days. He landed in Boston the 30th of March, and went immediately to Iowa City, the gathering-place of the Saints prior to their departure for Utah, arriving there to 10th of April.

He expected, of course, to go to work at once, and was very impatient to do so, as it was very nearly the season when the emigrants should start to cross the plains, and the first vessel filled with them was already due in New York. He knew it would be a waste both in time and money to keep them in Iowa City any longer than was absolutely necessary; besides which, after a certain date, every day would increase the perils of crossing the plains. But when he arrived, Daniel Spencer, the principal agent, was east on a visit, and did not make his appearance until an entire month had expired; and there was all that valuable time wasted in order that one man might indulge in a little pleasure. What were a thousand or more human lives in comparison to his enjoyment? Less than nothing, it would seem, in his estimation.

Not only were there no materials provided to work with, but no provision had been made for sheltering the poor Saints, who had already commenced to arrive by ship-loads. Their condition was pitiable in the extreme; they had met nothing but privation from the time they left England. The trials that had been promised them they had already encountered, but so great was their faith, that they bore it all without a word of complaint, and some even rejoicing that it was their lot to suffer for the cause of their religion; they were sure they should all be brought to Zion in safety, for had not God promised that through the mouth of His holy Prophet? Their faith was sublime in its exaltation; and in contrast to it, the cold-blooded, scheming, blasphemous policy of Young and his followers shows out false, and blacker than ever. To have deceived a credulous people by wanton misrepresentation is wicked enough, but to do it

205 MISERIES OF THE OCEAN-TRANSIT.

“in the name of the Lord” is a sin that can never be atoned

for to God or man. It is the height of blasphemy, and I fairly shudder as I endeavor to comprehend, in some slight degree, the magnitude of such an offense.



They had been crowded and huddled together on shipboard more like animals than like human beings; their food had been insufficient and of bad quality; the sleeping accommodations were limited, and there was not the proper amount of bedding for those who were compelled to sleep in the more exposed places. Some of the persons who saw the emigrants, say that it was like nothing so much as an African slave-ship, filled with its unlawful and ill-gotten freight. The air in the steerage, where most of the emigrants were, was noxious, and yet these people were compelled to breathe it through all the days of the voyage. Many were too ill to leave their beds, and a change of clothing was out of the question. The entire floor was covered with mattresses, and it was impossible to walk about without stepping over some one. Men, women, and children were huddled in together in the most shameless fashion.

Affairs were not much bettered when they arrived at New

206 STRANGERS—PENILESS AND HELPLESS!

York; the Apostle John Taylor, whose duty it was to provide for them there, was too deeply engaged in a quarrel with Apostle Franklin D. Richards, as to which of the two was higher in authority, to attend to these poor creatures, who were thrown on his protection, penniless and helpless, in a strange country. But everyone must understand that his personal dignity must be attended to and his position maintained, if all the poor Saints that were emigrated, of dreamed of emigrating, should die of starvation and exposure. I think the great body of Saints must have learned before this time that it is by no means safe to trust to the tender mercies of a Mormon Apostle. When, after a while, the Apostle Taylor's imperative personal business allowed

him a moment in which to think of the unhappy emigrants, he started them for Iowa City, where they arrived only to experience a repetition of their New York sufferings, and see another illustration of apostolic neglect. Nothing had been prepared for them either in the way of shanties or tents, and they were compelled to camp in the open air, their only roof a sky that was not always blue. While in camp, there were several very severe rain-storms, from which, as they had no shelter, there was no escape; they got completely drenched, and this caused a great deal of severe illness among them. They were unprotected alike from burning sun and pitiless, chilling rain, and it is no wonder that fevers and dysentery prevailed, and that hundreds of longing eyes closed in death before they beheld the Zion of their hopes.

It would have been strange if the faith of some had not wavered then; yet none dared complain. There was nothing to do but to go on to the end. They were thousands of miles from home, with no means of returning, and they were taught, too, that it would be a curse upon them to turn their backs on Zion. So there they remained through the long summer days, waiting helplessly until they should be ordered to move onward.

At length my father saw his way clear to commence his

207 BUILDING THE HAND-CARTS.

work, and he went to work with a will, pressing everyone who could be of actual assistance into his service. But here the trouble commenced again. He was instructed to make the wagons on as economical a plan as possible, and every step that he took he found himself hedged about by impossibilities. The agents all talked economy, and when one did raise an objection to a proposal, another did, and difficulties were placed in his way constantly.

They did not wish to furnish iron for the tires, as it was too expensive; raw hide, they were sure, would do just as well. My father argued this point with them until at last the agents decided to give up raw hides, and they furnished him with hoop iron. He was annoyed and angry, all the while he was making the carts, at the extreme parsimony displayed. A thorough workman himself, he wanted good materials to work with; but every time he asked for anything, no matter how absolutely necessary it was to make to work sufficiently durable to stand the strain of so long a journey, the reply invariably was, "O, Brother Webb, the carts must be made cheap. We can't afford this expenditure; you are too extravagant in your outlay;" forgetting, in their zeal to follow the Prophet's instructions, what the consequences would be to the poor Saints, if delayed on their way to the Valley, by having to stop to repair their carts.

As soon as was possible they started companies on the way. My father strongly objected to any of them start-

ing after the last of June; but he was overruled, and the last company left Iowa City the middle of August, for a journey across arid plains and over snow-clad mountains, which it took twelve weeks of the quickest traveling at that time to accomplish; and in the manner in which these emigrants were going it would take much longer. He also opposed their being started with such a scanty allowance of provisions: He insisted they should have at least double the amount; but in this attempt, also, he was unsuccessful, and

208 GOING CHEAP!

one of the survivors of the expedition afterwards said that the rations which were given out to each person for a day could easily be eaten at breakfast. They consisted of ten ounces of flour for each adult, and half that amount for each child under eight years of age. At rare intervals, a little rice, coffee, sugar, and bacon were doled out to the hungry travelers, but this was not often done. Many of the people begged of the farmers of Iowa, so famished were they, and so inadequate was their food which was supplied them by the agents. They were limited, too, if the matter of baggage, and again my father tried to use his influence, but all to no purpose; so much might go, but not a pound more.

Almost discouraged, and altogether disgusted with the meanness and heartless carelessness which were exhibited throughout the whole affair, as far, at least, as he had experience with it, he yet made one more attempt to aid the unfortunate travelers, whose trails, great as they had been, had really not fairly begun. His last proposition was, that more teams should be provided, so that the feeble, who were not likely to endure the fatigues of the long march, should have an opportunity of riding; but he was met again with the inevitable reply, "Can't do it, Brother Webb. We tell you we can't afford it; they must go cheap." It was dear enough in the end, if human lives count for anything.

My father never speaks of those days of preparation in Iowa City that he does not grow indignant. It might have been averted had not Brigham Young been so parsimonious, and his followers so eager to curry favor with him, by carrying out his instructions more implicitly than there was any need of doing. They were only quarreled and found fault with, and reprimanded publicly in the Tabernacle for their faithfulness to him, when it became necessary to shield himself from odium in the matter. Nothing more would have happened if they had obeyed the instincts of humanity, and deferred a little to their consciences, and they

209 REMONSTRANCES OF NO AVAIL.

Certainly would have been better off, as they would at least

have retained their own self-respect, and the regard of their unfortunate charges, which, it is needless to say, they lost most completely.

When some of the last companies reached Council Bluffs—better known to most Mormons as "Winter-Quarters"—there was considerable controversy whether it was best to try and go any farther before spring. Most of the emigrants know nothing of the climate and the perils of the undertaking, and were eager to press on to Zion. Four men only in the company had crossed the plains; those were captains of the trains—Willie, Atwood, Savage, and Woodward; but there were several elders at this place superintending emigration. Of these, Levi Savage was the only one to remonstrate against attempting to reach Salt Lake Valley so late in the season. He declared that it would be utterly impossible to cross the mountains without great suffering even death.

His remonstrations availed as much my father's had done in regard to their starting. He was defeated and reprimanded very sharply for his want of faith. He replied that there were cases where "common sense" was the best guide, and he considered this to be one. "However," said he, "seeing you are to go forward, I will go with you, will help you all I can, will work with you, suffer with you, and, if necessary die with you."

Very soon after the departure of the last company of the emigrants from Iowa City, my father, with the other elders, started for the Valley in mule-teams, intending to return, if they found it necessary, to bring succor to the poor wandering people. In the company with my father were Apostle Franklin D. Richards, and Elders W. H. Kimball, G.D. Grant, Joseph A. Young, Brigham's oldest son, and several others, all of whom were returning to Utah from foreign missions, and all of whom had been engaged in the expedition.

210 SHORT SUPPLY OF FOOD AND CLOTHING.

They overtook the emigrants at their camp on the North Fork of the Platte River, and camped with them over night. Richards was told of the opposition which Savage had made, and he openly rebuked him in the morning. He then informed the Saints that "though it might storm on the right hand and on the left, yet the storms should not reach them. The Lord would keep the way open before them, and they should reach Zion in safety." It may be that he believed all this nonsense himself. It is to be hoped, for charity's sake, that he did. If that were the case, however, it is a pity that he had not been endowed with a little of Levi Savage's common sense. It would have been much better for the Saints than all his vaunted "spirit of prophecy."

It is significant fact, that in the very face of his



prophesy, delivered to the victims of his zeal in the cause of Brigham Young, he was anxious to hasten his arrival in Salt Lake in order to send assistance back to the patient Hand-Cart emigrants, who, he must have seen, would soon be in sore straits for food and clothing. The rations were scanty, and would soon have to be lessened; the nights were chilly, and fast growing cold; and already the seventeen pounds of bedding and clothing allowed to each one were scarcely sufficient protection; and as the season advanced, and they approached the mountains, it would be totally inadequate. It was fortunate that they did not know the climate of the county, and the terrible hardships to which they were to be exposed, else their hearts would have failed them, and they would have no courage to have recommenced the journey. My father realized it, and so did most of the party with him; yet they had no idea how horrible it was to be, else they would have insisted upon their remaining in camp until spring. Even the usually indifferent heart of Joseph A. was touched, and he hurried on to impress upon his father the urgent need for immediate assistance for those poor, forlorn creatures whom

211 BRIGHAM'S RESPONSIBILILTY.

he left preparing to cross the mountains, where they would of a surety meet the late autumn and early winter storms, and where so many of them must of a certainty perish of exposure and hunger. He had no faith in the apostolic prophesy, which seemed a mockery to all those who knew the hardships of the journey which lay before these faithful souls before they could reach the Zion of their hopes.

My father had been four years absent from us, yet such was his concern for the poor people whom he so recently left, and who had been his care for so long, that he could only stay to give us the most hurried greetings. His gladness at his return, and our responsive joy, were marred by the thought of the sufferings and privations of those earnest, simple-hearted Saints, who had literally left all to follow the beck of one whom they supposed to be the Prophet of the Lord. After all these years of absence, he only staid two days with us—as short a time as it could possibly take to get the relief-train ready with the supplies.

I think Brigham Young's heart and conscience must have been touched, for he really seemed for a while to forget himself in the earnestness with which he pushed forward the preparations for relief. He fairly arose to the occasion, and held back nothing which could contribute to the comfort and welfare of his poor, forlorn followers. Yet he was only acting as both justice and decency commanded that he should act. He was the cause of all this terrible suffering, and he felt that he should be made answerable. Such a transaction as this could by no means remain unknown. It would be spread over America and Europe, and

used as a strong weapon against Mormonism and its leader, already unpopular enough. He realized the mistake he had made when too late to rectify it, and, with his usual moral cowardice, he set about hunting for somebody on whose shoulders to shift the blame from his own. Richards and Spencer were the unfortunate victims, and he turned his wrath against them, in private conversation and in public assem-

212 SHIFTING THE BLAME.

blies, until they were nearly crushed by the weight of opprobrium which he heaped upon them. He was nearly beside himself with fear of the consequences which would follow, when this crowning act of selfish cupidity and egotistical vanity and presumption should be known. Love of approbation is a striking characteristic of this Latter-Day Prophet, and he puffs and swells with self-importance at every word he receives, even of the baldest, most insincere flattery, and he cringes and crouches in as servile a manner as a whipped cur, when any adverse criticism is passed upon either his *personnel* or his actions. A moral as well as a physical coward, he dares not face a just opinion of himself and his deeds, and he sneaks, and skulks, and hides behind any one he can find who is broad enough to shield him.

My father's disgust at a religion which submitted to such chicanery, and his distrust of Brigham Young, were so great, that he was very near apostatizing; but my mother again held him to the church. She argued and explained; she wept and she entreated, until he said no more about it. But though, for her sake, he took no steps towards leaving the church and renouncing the faith, he felt daily his disgust and distrust increasing, and he never again believed so strongly in the Mormon religion, and ever after regarded Brigham with much less awe and respect than formerly.