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## Moroni, A Sketch of the Nephite Republic, VIII

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**Abstract:** Roberts discusses the failed political attempts by “monarchists” among the Nephites to reform the government to a system more to their liking. The subsequent actions of Captain Moroni relevant to them are discussed, as is Moroni’s role appointed role as a “dictator” in the Roman tradition for the preservation of the people. Amalickiah’s series of successes, leading up to his ignominious assassination at the hands of Teancum is also discussed. Roberts offers brief insights as to how that action is sometimes perceived in modern times, against how it would have been understood anciently.

bosom of Eternity. The current of our lives is changed forever if we have made a wise use of this time. The refined nature catches at the excellence of poetry and the beauties of the universe. To all such, at the view of the declining sun that glints on the foliage of the trees throwing shadows on the landscape, showing up the beauties of light and shadow, the heart is filled with an exalted sense of appreciation.

How wonderful are the mysteries of the insect kingdom! What glory and light we witness in the kingdom of flowers! Yet many who have passed years in study never behold these beauties and delights.

Wordsworth, speaking of this class, says:

"A primrose by the river's brim  
A yellow primrose was to him,  
And it was nothing more."

By all these things we are plainly shown that we are of a dual nature. The Apostle John says: "There is a light that lighteth every soul that cometh into the world." By some being so full of appreciation, and others having eyes yet see not, it must be that to some is given more, of this light, or else some cultivate it more

than others. It was promised to be a guide unto our feet and a light unto our souls. So all knowledge which but develops our physical part, must fall short, unless our spiritual nature be also cultivated. To do this we must be guided by the never failing light of that lamp of which the Apostle speaks. Then the rough diamond within us will be so polished that we can behold the glory of the Creator displayed in the starry heavens, and witness His majesty and wrath in the storm-tossed waves of the mighty ocean. These speak of His power and wisdom, but the little violet growing under the hedge speaks of His great love, and the helpless little bird in its nest, of His kind and fatherly care.

The unending light of that spiritual lamp will truly guide our feet to the Great Fountain of all knowledge. I pray that we all, dear friends, may quaff deep of these waters, that we may never lack knowledge, or thirst for love or appreciation any more.

*Nettie Alder.*

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At learning's fountain it is sweet to drink,  
But 'tis a nobler privilege to think.

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## MORONI.

### A SKETCH OF THE NEPHITE REPUBLIC.

#### VIII.

It is always a critical time in a republic when its chief executive is to be elected. It is then that party passion is wrought up to its highest pitch. It is then that ambitious demagogues meet with disappointment by failing to obtain the election for themselves or for those over whom they hoped to have an influence. Unfortunately it is but seldom that a nation has such characters as Pædaretus, the Spartan, in it, who, when he learned that he had failed to be chosen one of three hundred who had a certain rank of distinction in the city, went home rejoicing that in Sparta there were three hundred men more worthy of the place than himself. Too often it happens, that disappointed men, ambitious of place or power, seek to wreck the government they cannot rule.

Moreover, at these elections, old questions that have been settled before by the voice of the people are agitated again; and changes in the constitution and laws are urged upon the attention of the people—changes, too, not always of a salutary nature; and such changes find champions—always bold, often unscrupulous, and sometimes successful; and thus good governments are frequently corrupted by the introduction of pernicious changes or principles into their constitutions.

These remarks, I believe, apply to republics in general; they are particularly true of the Nephite Republic. And some of them are exemplified in the election of Pahoran to the chief judgeship, with the notice of which our last chapter closed. The Monarchist Party, suppressed by the vigorous measures adopted by Moroni, only five years before, again arose; but



now was more insidious in its methods than before; perhaps the factors composing it remembered that Moroni still lived, and that his attachment for the republic was undiminished, while his hatred of monarchy had grown no less; therefore they asked that the constitution should be changed only in a few particulars. But those "few particulars," if the changes had been made, would have been sufficient to have overthrown the free government, in the estimation of the Nephite writers, and therefore Pahoran was steadfast in his determination that the alterations should not be made.

Finding that Pahoran would not make the desired changes, the Monarchist Party sought to deprive him of the chief judgeship, and such was their influence that the matter was referred to the people, who gave their votes in support of the position taken by the chief judge, and he retained his office to the great joy of the free men, or friends of the republic, and to the corresponding disappointment of the aristocracy, or those who sought to be recognized as such.

It was in the midst of this political agitation that the Lamanites, under the leadership of Amalickiah, appeared on the south-east frontier of the Nephite possessions, before the city Moroni. The appearance of Amalickiah with his forces, at the very crisis of the political agitation above mentioned, gives strong grounds for believing there must have been an understanding and co-operation of movement between this bold traitor and the Monarchists still living within the republic. At any rate when the disappointed Monarchists learned of the appearance of Amalickiah with his army, they made no effort to conceal their satisfaction, and refused to take up arms against the invaders.

Moroni had evidently been a close observer of these events, and at the refusal of the Monarchist Party to take up arms in defense of the government, had his suspicion of treason, and applied for power to suppress it. He wrote out a petition, which the people sustained, and presented it to the chief judge, asking that he (Moroni) be given power to com-

pel the Monarchists to defend their country, or put them to death. The chief judge granted this petition of Moroni and the people. Moroni, always prompt to act when the republic was in danger, and further spurred on to activity by the presence of an enemy on his frontier, at once marched against the Monarchists. So stubborn were they that they resisted his army even unto bloodshed; and not until four thousand of their number fell by the sword could they be reduced to submission. Their property was destroyed in order to humble their pride, and they were compelled to accept the principles of liberty of which the standard of Moroni was the emblem. Their claims to nobility of blood they renounced, and took up arms in the cause of the government; and thus an end was made to a would-be aristocracy. The leaders of this movement, those who were not killed, were cast into prison to await their trial for treason, since there was no time to try them at the time of their capture, as the army of Amalickiah was playing havoc in the southwest, and all the attention of the government was required to repel the invasion.

Before I begin the account of this war, a word on the power conferred upon Moroni to put down the Monarchists, and which he seems to have retained throughout this war.

It is generally conceded that democracies are liable to be weak in executing their laws: and it is because of this fact that some have held a democracy to be an impracticable form of government, however much the theory on which it is based may be admired. In order to obviate this difficulty democracies have not infrequently adopted the plan of creating trusted leaders dictators, clothed with all the authority of an absolute monarch during periods of special peril. Thus did the Romans a number of times during the existence of their grand republic, when any occasion arose that required prompt executive action, and action that should be unquestioned. And such, I believe, was the power conferred upon Moroni by the people and the chief judge. In other words, he was made dictator of



the republic in this its moment of supreme trial; and we shall see, in the history of the period we are about to relate, that it was well that the destinies of the government were committed to one at once so wise, and yet so prompt in action.

Meantime Amalickiah had been meeting with a series of uninterrupted successes. The city of Moroni had fallen into his hands, and from thence he began a march along the East Sea Coast, taking city after city, the principal of which were Moroni, Nephiah, Lehi, Morianton, Omner, Gid and Mulek, nearly all of which were the new cities founded during the reign of peace following the war that closed in the nineteenth year of the republic. Amalickiah repaired and strengthened the fortifications of these cities that they might be strongholds for the Lamanites as they had before been for their enemies.

Leaving portions of his great army in the cities he had taken, Amalickiah continued his march up the sea coast with the hope, doubtless, of obtaining the narrow isthmus which led into the land northward. But the land Bountiful, with its splendidly fortified city of the same name, lay between him and that narrow pass, and there, too, was Moroni's great lieutenant, the right hand of the republic, Teancum, with his army of veterans. And here in the borders of the land Bountiful the imperious traitor and his victorious army met with defeat. Teancum drove him from the borders of Bountiful to the sea coast, and the work of destruction went on until the darkness of night compelled it to stop.

Fatigue, brought on by the excessive heat of the climate—for those men were fighting in the heart of the torrid zone—as much as by the excited action of the battle, compelled Amalickiah to encamp his army near where defeat had overtaken him, and either renew the doubtful conflict on the morrow or begin a retreat. That morrow, however, he did not live to see; for Teancum, with only a single attendant, when sleep had sealed the eyes of others, stealthily passed their own lines and entered the encampment

of the enemy. Finding the tent of Amalickiah, Teancum entered it and drove a javelin into the heart of the sleeping traitor. So dexterously was the feat accomplished that even the servants of Amalickiah were not awakened, and Teancum with his trusty servant returned to their own encampment in safety from their perilous expedition.

On entering within the lines of his own army, Teancum had his soldiers awakened and the event of the night related to them. He also desired that they should be in readiness lest the Lamanites on finding their leader slain should make a sudden attack upon his army to avenge his death. With the first signs of returning day the dead body of their leader was discovered by the Lamanites, but as they saw the army of Teancum in readiness to receive them, consternation instead of a desire for revenge took possession of them, and they retreated hastily to the city of Mulek where they could feel secure from the army of Teancum, of which they had a mortal fear, though it was much inferior in point of numbers to their own. Here the brother of Amalickiah was chosen king of the Lamanites. His name was Ammoron, a character in every way worthy to succeed his brother, being second only to him in treason and other villainy.

Here let us pause to reflect upon the action of Teancum in taking the life of Amalickiah; and upon the character of the latter. First, then, as to the deed of Teancum: I doubt not if it were viewed in the light of those rules that govern modern warfare, the deed would not escape censure; and that high sense of honor usually attributed to army officers of high standing in our times would make such a deed unworthy any one of them. For instance, had General Grant or Sheridan or Sherman in the late rebellion stolen to the tent of the great Southern General, Robert E. Lee, and taken his life while asleep—I confess to a feeling of repulsiveness in the contemplation of such a thing, and such an act would doubtless have met with unstinted condemnation. But let it be remembered



that Teacum lived in another age, with customs different from those we know; and was of a race different to ours; and after all, that mysterious thing called "sense of honor" depends largely upon training, upon education, and so far as one may judge from what is written in the Nephite Annals in our possession, there was no shadow of condemnation, no taint of dishonor, attributed to Teacum for his action in this matter. The fact, too, that Amalickiah was a traitor, and had forfeited his life to the state, goes far to mitigate the deed of Teacum even in our eyes. To cite a supposed case more nearly akin to the one in which Teacum was the chief actor: Suppose a prominent general in the American army, had passed through the lines of the British army to the tent of Benedict Arnold when he was laying districts in Connecticut waste, and struck him down as Teacum did Amalickiah. I think the American people would have been more likely to have voted him a monument than to have passed a vote of censure upon him in Congress.

As for the character of the man who fell by the hand of Teacum, but little need be said, since those who have had the patience to follow us through this sketch have as much data on which to base their view of him as the writer has. That he possessed executive ability of a very high order, must be conceded—the remarkable success of his enterprises among the Lamanites, by which he raised himself to their throne, proves it. That he possessed courage—I may say a desperate courage—cannot be denied. To say that he was an ambitious, cunning, unscrupulous, desperate villain and traitor, is only to repeat what the readers

of these chapters already know. His was a stormy life, and violent was its ending. It ended, too, before he had attained to the darling object of his ambition—supreme authority over both Nephites and Lamanites, united into one kingdom, himself the king. Nor did he even have the poor satisfaction of fulfilling the rash oath he made to drink the blood of Moroni; but he was sent to his account with all his sins upon his head ere half his ambitious dreams were realized, and left his patriot foe-man on the earth to direct the destinies of the great republic whose overthrow he had sought to encompass.

Amalickiah's life is one that illustrates a character powerful intellectually, but devoid of those moral and spiritual sensibilities which restrain the baser elements in man's nature and keep him somewhere near the rule of right. His was the typical infidel character; that is, one who is in earnest in his infidelity. He felt no sense of responsibility to anyone for his conduct. Everything was lawful to him that he could accomplish. He recognized no criterion for his actions but his own selfish interests, and with cruel consistency he steadily walked in the path where he considered those interests led him, and unscrupulously removed from it all obstacles that seemed to obstruct his progress, though to accomplish such removal compelled him to make red his hands in the blood of his fellowmen. Fortunate it is for our race that from the very nature of man such characters are only now and then possible; and even when they do exist, they are monstrosities, and, being regarded as such, are deprived of the power to work much mischief.

*B. H. Roberts.*

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## PIONEER SKETCHES.

### V.

#### SEEKING A REFUGE IN THE DESERT—II.

In the previous number we referred to a company of emigrants who perished of starvation in the desert of Southern Nevada, in 1849, while vainly seeking a

shorter route to California. As we found many traces of the lost company, during our explorations in those deserts, it seems proper to refer to its sad fate in this article. As we previously mentioned, one of our number, a Mr. Bennett, was one