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The Bright Warrior

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Abstract: This article is a fictional story of Samuel the Lamanite as might have been seen through the eyes of a Nephite boy named Nathan.

THE sun poured heat into the walled city until the confines of it burned like a filled cup. Tempers flared along the Street of Merchants, and the voices of women buyers rose shrewdly.

Nathan wiped the perspiration from his small, scrawny neck and bided patiently the moment when the corpulent form of his Uncle Limhi should be turned toward the east.

It happened after almost an hour's waiting, and Nathan sped at once around the corner of the stall and seized some fruit his tongue had been dripping for and turned to flee. His joy was full. Uncle Limhi, waiting on three elegantly clad ladies, had not seen.

Nathan gained the shelter of the west wall but as he turned to run down the narrow, shaded street, a hand, brown and strong caught him by the shoulder.

Nathan fought fiercely to escape. But the hand was strong. Nathan's eyes followed up the brown muscled arm to the dark, fierce features of a young Lamanite.

"Let go," Nathan whispered, "or I shall call my uncle."

"You are a liar as well as a thief," the Lamanite said sadly; "you will not call anyone. Why must you steal?"

"My belly commands me," said Nathan haughtily. "It has been empty a day now."

"Have you no parents to give you food?"

Nathan ceased his struggles and hung limp in the Lamanite's hand. It had no effect on the man, who, not at all diverted, let Nathan sag to the ground and caught his wrist instead.

"I have a mother," said Nathan, "who is also hungry. Two of these are for her." He held up the fruit. "And the pits are for a tree of my own, three trees. Then I shall have fruit of my own and sell it and become rich like my father's brother, Limhi."

The Lamanite squatted beside him. "He is your uncle? Won't he help you?"

Nathan looked at the man pityingly out of wide blue eyes. "Where do you come from, Lamanite, that you think a man takes care of any save his own family and not then unless he feels so inclined."

The Lamanite shook his head. "My



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by Margery S. Stewart

name is Samuel, and I come from a great and good people. They have been keeping the commandments your fathers brought to them. They love and take care of all within the tribe. None go hungry."

"You lie," said Nathan and took a great bite out of the smallest fruit. The juice ran down his chin. "I know all about your people."

"All that your uncle and others like him have taught you."

"Where else should I learn?" he

asked wonderingly. "He has taught me all I know."

"Taught you to steal?"

"Of course. He steals—we all steal. We lie. Why should we do other?"

Samuel shook his head. "I know. I have seen much wickedness in the days I have been in your city. I long to go back to my own people."

Nathan sucked gently on the pit. "Why don't you go? Nothing to hold you here. Besides, the people

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in Zarahemla aren't too fond of roving Lamanites. Some of them might stone you for sport."

"I am sent," the Lamanite said simply. "I must stay until I am told to return. Would you know of a place where I could stay this night?"

Nathan's bright eyes narrowed. "For a price I could find you a bed."

The Lamanite smiled and reached in his pouch for silver. He laid the coins in Nathan's hand. "Find me a bed, then."

Nathan looked at him curiously. "Are you not afraid I will run off with your money?"

Samuel shook his head. "No—should I be?"

Nathan considered, the trust a new thing in his life. "No," he said reluctantly. "I cannot run away, why, I do not know. Come with me. I will take you to my mother."

"First," said Samuel, "you must pay for the fruit."

Nathan drew back in disgust. "Pay for them! He didn't even see me."

The Lamanite rose. Nathan drew back a little. The man was so tall, so strong, when he folded his arms the muscles rippled in his shoulders. His eyes were very dark and bright, and they seemed to pierce Nathan through and through. He went reluctantly to his uncle's stall and threw a coin on the counter. "For the fruit. Wormy it is and not fit to be sold."

Limhi pounced on the silver. "I

burdens, I have nothing to spare—nothing."

"You deny yourself great joy," Samuel said gently, "the joy of seeing a man child grow up strong and good and a credit to your house instead of, perhaps, a felon, or worse—a man hanging on the town gibbet."

"When I am richer, Lamanite," Limhi said, "I shall be more charitable, but until then I shall take care of my own and no more."

"But your commandments," Samuel said, "are they to be kept only if a man wills? It was not thus you taught us."

Nathan watched the telltale signs of his uncle's wrath, the livid lines that ran down from his nose, the narrowing of his little eyes, the trembling of his hands on the fruit. "Do you," demanded Limhi, "a Lamanite, dare to preach to me who am of the house of Nephi?"

"We had better go," Nathan tugged at Samuel's hand.

"I am sent," Samuel said. "I was commanded to come to this people and warn them. If I warn you not of God's wrath because of your evil, then am I false to him."

Nathan trembled watching the fierce red sweep up from his uncle's neck.

"Men of Zarahemla!" shouted Limhi. Soldiers came running, and shoppers began to crowd about them. "This Lamanite has come to tell us—us—Nephites, that we must repent. That we must repent. He has

dared to tell me that I am a breaker of commandments."

Nathan turned to run. He had watched many times when men began to mutter as they were doing now. The heat of the day seemed to enter into them and come out in scalding whispers that burned against his ears. He tugged at Samuel's arm. "If you do not come now, they will kill you, and they will throw me in the dungeon for being your friend. Would you have that happen to one who has befriended you?"

Samuel took his hand, "Be not fearful, little one." He lifted his voice. "Men of Zarahemla, I shall return tomorrow at this hour. I will tell you what I was sent to tell you and after that you may do as you wish." He did not wait for their reply.

Nathan followed in openmouthed amazement. The men fell back before the Lamanite. He said when they were well away, "You are a very brave man, Samuel. Almost as brave as my father was."

Samuel put his hand on Nathan's shoulder. "He must have been a fine man to have had a son like you."

After a time they turned into the tumble-down shelter that was Nathan's home. "My father believed as you do, in the commandments. My uncle laughed at him and called him a fool because he tried to keep them. But my father is dead, and my uncle keeps them not and is rich. I do not understand."

Samuel rumbled his hair, "Before the hunt is over, no one can tell which man will have most meat."

Nathan grinned at him and opened the door of his house.

His mother, Rachel, turned from her spinning. "Nathan, I was becoming afraid for you."

He ran to her and hugged her. "Mother, I have brought a friend. He is brave as my father. He has paid me silver for a bed."

"If it is difficult for you," the Lamanite said, "I will go elsewhere."

Rachel held out her hand to him. "A friend of my son's is my friend also. There is a pallet in Nathan's room. I fear you will not find it too comfortable."

Samuel's eyes swept over the meager furnishings of the little house,

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He tugged at Samuel's arm. "If you do not come now, they will kill you and throw me into the dungeon. . . ."

was saving the fruit for my own dinner," he howled. "I should charge you double."

"Charge him no more than a fair price," said a quiet voice behind Nathan.

Nathan watched the face of his uncle change as it stared into Samuel's dark, strong face. He laughed within as his uncle counted out change.

"How is it," said Samuel, "that you, a merchant of wealth and position permit the son of your brother to go hungry and naked and his wife to labor beyond her strength?"

Limhi looked up openmouthed.

"I have been watching many things," Samuel said.

Limhi wrung his hands. "But there are taxes and heavy civic



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and the figure of President Heber J. Grant in the Salt Lake Tabernacle as he repeated over and over, the great lesson for churches, states, and all other associations in this or any other country:

No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned;

By kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile—

(D. & C. 121:41-42.)

If this be true of Presidents, Apostles, stake presidents, bishops, and the priesthood of the Church of Jesus Christ generally (accepting the revelation of man's free agency as primary), how much more might it be advocated as a political doctrine for all mankind, struggling by virtue of the spirits within them, toward freedom!

AS STALIN died, and the Christian world turned its thoughts to Easter in the age of hydrogen bombs, Herbert Agar wrote in the *New York Herald*

Tribune: "On the greatness of our faith, depends the future of our world."

How great is our faith? In the God, who (as the poem says) "will force no man to heaven" and who respects man's freedom to choose? In the use of that agency to pursue the truth—to establish and maintain institutions where the truth can be pursued, taught, and examined in the great spirit of the article of faith which humbly recognizes the finite limits of the mind; that there is much more to "be revealed"; and, as Joseph Smith and Wilford Woodruff taught, that all men are entitled to the spirit of revelation.

On the greatness of such faith, may be said to rest the future of the world. To curb those who, like Stalin, quest in error and have potentiality for evil, we may advance the great doctrine of "amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man" who "in any degree of unrighteousness" undertakes to cover his sins, gratify his pride or ambition, "or to exercise control or dominion or compulsion upon the souls of the children of men. . . ." (D. & C. 121:37.)

We are the inheritors of a great faith and of a superb set of doctrines to advance freedom, and make progressive human relations prevail without exercising undue "dominion or compulsion upon the souls . . . of men" in these times.

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saw the pitiful supper laid out so neatly on the rough table. "I shall go first and purchase a few things. Then I shall return."

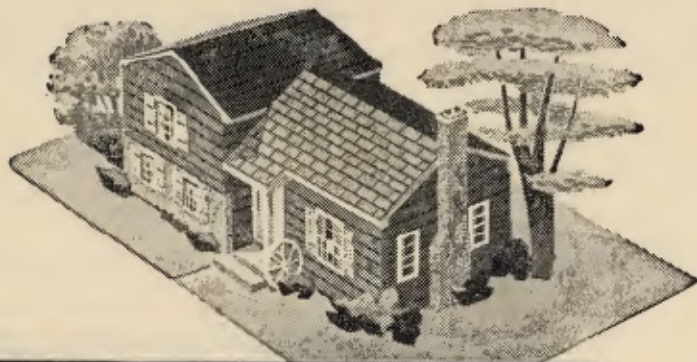
Nathan ran to the door to watch him go and turned back to his mother. "He is a brave man—you should have heard how he talked to Uncle Limhi."

Rachel listened. She nodded. "He is not like other men. There is something very wonderful about him and good. I feel a great strength flowing from him."

Nathan took the fruit from his robe and gave it to her. "He made me pay for it, Mother. He would not let me steal." He pressed them on her. "No, I am not hungry. They are all for you, only give me the pits. I will plant them in our garden, and soon we shall have three trees of our own, and we shall eat fruit all day long."

She laughed and kissed him and gave the two pits into his hand.

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Samuel returned when Nathan was patting the earth above them. He knelt beside him. "So, they are planted then. You buried them deep?"

"Yes, sir."

Samuel said slowly, "I have brought seed with me which I long to plant."

Nathan smiled. "Good, there is much room in my garden. Plant them here."

"These seeds are words," Samuel said, "that I strive to plant in the hearts of men—in secret earth that can bring forth mighty harvests."

"Tell me the words," said Nathan, "I would bring forth harvest, too. I have great need to be very rich."

After supper Samuel rose and pulled Nathan to his feet. "Would you like a bow and some arrows? Come, then. We will go into the forest and find the tree that is better than all trees for bows, and I will tell you the words I have brought."

It was wonderful to Nathan to follow Samuel, to walk under his protecting strength, to listen when he talked. Samuel talked to everyone, to the blind man in Beggar's Street, to the fathers and mothers sitting on their doorsteps in the evenings, to the soldiers and the schoolboys. Nathan, pattering behind Samuel, pausing when he paused, learned to know the faces of people. He learned to know what the shining meant that came upon their eyes when they listened, believing. He learned what the blackness meant that came into the faces of others and to read the anger that twisted their mouths. Nathan marveled at Samuel's patience as he explained over and over again that commandments were not words to be kept on the plates only, but living laws to be used every hour of the day.

"You love everyone," Nathan accused him jealously one day, when he had made a bow for the little girl next door.

"I love people," Samuel said simply, "because I know what they are and what they have it in them to become."

But the people did not all love Samuel. Nathan marveled that the tall, perceptive Lamanite should be so dull of hearing to the hisses that increased day by day when he passed. Samuel never seemed to consider the cost of telling people they were doing evil in the sight of God.

It was on the last day of summer. It was hotter than it had ever been. Nathan and Samuel walked slowly under the great burden of heat to the Street of Merchants. But there was a difference today that Nathan's sharp eyes noticed almost at once—a tension and a waiting. Nathan looked about the crowded, noisy street. The people looked the same. His uncle was haggling over a melon, and a small boy was pelting another with overripe fruit. Men were gathered on the corner, soldiers and merchants and idlers and the young

bloods of the town, their beards sparse on their clear cheeks.

One of the young men looked toward them and dug his neighbor in the side; the news ran like a small wind around the gathering. Nathan felt fear blow like winter across his neck. "Samuel—let us go back. This day is not good for us."

But Samuel's hand was warm and steady in his own. "It is only I they seek, not you. Be not afraid."

The men started toward them, and Nathan pulled at the Lamanite's

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hand. "Follow me quickly. I know a twisting way they cannot follow."

"No," said Samuel gently, "I must stay."

The leader of the growing band was a great bear of a man—Noah, by name. He was a blacksmith. Nathan had spent many hours at the door of his shop, watching him shoe horses, marveling at his strength. His smile was wide and gleaming.

"Greetings, Lamanite," he said jovially.

Samuel nodded.

"We have been listening to you for the past few weeks here in Zarahemla."

Samuel was silent. Nathan crowded against him.

The men drew closer until they were in a half circle around them, and Nathan looking over his shoulder saw that they had been pressed back to the wall.

The leader spat. "We understand you do not like our way of living—our sins offend you."

There was a bellow of laughter from the others.

"A Lamanite teaching the commandments to the Nephites! Now surely we have seen everything."

Samuel held his hand up for silence. They were still. Nathan marveled at that. They obeyed Samuel, not knowing they did.

"I was told in a dream to rise up and come to you. I did not come of myself. He sent me."

There was a silence. Then a man in the rear shouted, "He would not send a Lamanite—not one with a cursed skin."

"Stone him!"

"Stone him!"

Their cries rose higher. They advanced toward Samuel, loosening the knives fastened in their belts. Some picked up stones.

"Samuell!" Nathan whispered. He felt the great, warm hand on his shoulder.

"When I step toward them, do you run quickly and join them and so melt away when they are done with me?" He folded his arms. "Is this how my people received your fathers?"

The roar increased, but Samuel's voice, low still but carrying, easily penetrated their clamor. "If it had been so, none of us would have received the word. But there are many

who have received it and do live it. Now will ye destroy me for following the commandments of God?"

"Think you," the leader howled, "that a man of your skin would be sent among us, the Nephites? Behold, we have our own prophet, Nephi. Him will we hear."

Samuel stretched out his arms, "Then hear him, and ye will have no need of me."

Nathan, safe on the other side of the mob, climbed on a low roof. His heart was pounding painfully within him. For a moment he thought Samuel would surely triumph, for the mob surged up to him. Samuel waited, making no move, and they fell back from him. It took all Noah's urging before they would again surge up against the Lamanite and seize him. When they had him in their hands and he still offered no violence, their rage burst forth in fury, and they beat him and cast their stones.

The last Nathan saw of Samuel was his battered, blood-soaked form pushed to the city gates and flung down.

Nathan wept there alone upon the roof. He wept for his own smallness that was no shield for Samuel. He wept for the wounds of his friend, and he wept for hate of the men of Zarahemla. But most of all he wept against the helplessness of those who would do good. Why should he refrain from stealing, he thought mutinously, when to be righteous was to be defrauded from all cunning? Why should he love? He would be the target for all haters. For a hater, Nathan reasoned from the depths of his despair, has a weapon, but a man who loves is defenseless against all men. He rose after a time and slipped from the roof and turned toward home.

As he passed his uncle's stand he saw that it was, at the moment, unguarded. His uncle was searching in the room beyond for proper baskets. The fruit lured Nathan from their pyramids, and the new bread sent an enticing fragrance to his small nose. Nathan went past them all, not touching. He marveled at himself. Am I then become a woman? But his hand would not obey his desires. Nathan shrugged. "Tomorrow is another day, and I shall take double for this day's weakness."

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Nathan's mother wept when he told her of Samuel. All day long and through the night there came a little stream of men and women who had heard Samuel speak and had believed. They were frightened and bewildered. "If the men deal so with Samuel, what will they do with us who heard him?"

Nathan went out to the little garden and patted the ground above his three seeds. But he mocked himself for believing that his own longing

and planting would bring forth three strong trees heavy with fruit. Yet when he would tear the stones from the ground, he could not. That, too, must await the next day. He went wearily to bed.

It was noon when Nathan found his way again to the Street of Merchants. It was busier than ever because men and women must meet to discuss the events of yesterday. Nathan, his empty stomach prodding him, took up his post beside his uncle's stall, where he could watch

without being seen. He looked over the stock and set his mind to the ripe fruit placed so temptingly almost within reach. The world looked today as it had always done, a noisy hurrying place where one must snatch on the right hand and on the left, in order to receive one's share.

Noah, the blacksmith, was being feted on every side. His boastings grew louder and more untrue. Nathan watched him, and the tears of yesterday burned in his throat. Not since his father's death had he felt more desolate or alone.

"He will not come again," the leader was shouting, "I have driven him away with my good right hand, and he knows its strength too well to dare return."

There was a startled shout beyond him. Nathan looked up. Samuel stood on the wall.

"The Lamanite! The Lamanite!" Every eye was turned to that tall, still figure above them.

Nathan looked and saw Samuel and was still. It was a moment to be burned in fire on his memory as long as life should last. Upon the city wall, against the blazing light of noon, stood Samuel, the Lamanite. He stood tall, tall to Nathan's eyes as the sky about him. His bronze skin glowed against the blueness of the sky. The bruises were plain upon him still. He seemed heedless of them.

There was a great silence. Samuel lifted his hand. "Behold, I, Samuel, a Lamanite, do speak the words of the Lord which he doth put into my heart—"

Nathan crept closer among the silent people. Samuel continued speaking, and the words fell like water upon Nathan's thirsty heart. He could not understand them all, but the prophecies made him tremble. He was filled with a marvelous joy at the sight of Samuel returned, not overcome by those who had beaten him, but returned, strong and brave to deliver his message.

"Therefore," cried Samuel, "thus saith the Lord . . . except they repent I will take away my word from them, and I will withdraw my Spirit from them, and I will suffer them no longer. . . ."

Nathan thought of the day Samuel had knelt beside him in the garden and spoken of the words he would plant in the earth of a man's heart. Nathan touched his breast. Surely, he thought, it is troubled within as



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the ground is troubled when a man digs and harrows and prepares for seed.

The voice of Samuel went on and on. Nathan marveled that any man should be so bold.

" . . . And now when ye talk, ye say: If our days had been in the days of our fathers of old, we would not have slain the prophets; we would not have stoned them, and cast them out. Behold ye are worse than they. . . ."

Nathan looked apprehensively toward the leader, who yesterday had beaten Samuel. Noah was growling to his associates, and as Nathan watched, he fitted an arrow to his bow. He aimed at Samuel and held back his arm so that the muscles ridged on his shoulder.

Nathan cried out and sprang toward him. He flung himself against the man, and the arrow went wide. The leader turned on Nathan with a bellow of rage and picked him up and shook him until the earth spun before his eyes. "If you do that again, I shall make an end of you." He flung him down, and Nathan lay in the dust and watched helplessly as the second arrow flew through the air. It missed.

Nathan gave a cry of joy. He heard Samuel's strong voice speaking again of a thing which was yet to come. Now the men who had bows and arrows began to vie with each other to see which would silence the Lamanite. The arrows ripped through the air. There were cries of disappointment and rage as arrow after arrow flew wide of the mark.

"He has a devil," muttered the leader as he bent to pick up a stone. He hurled it with such force that Nathan hid his face, thinking any instant to hear the crushing sound of it on bone and flesh. There was a gasp and a cry from those near him, and Nathan opened his eyes. Samuel was still speaking.

"Your arm has lost its cunning," men shouted to Noah.

Raging, the leader picked up yet a larger stone and flung it with all his force. It, too, sped harmlessly beyond Samuel's body. Nathan looked at him. He showed no fear, indeed, his voice had grown stronger with each spent arrow and each fallen stone.

"For behold," Samuel was saying, "had the mighty works been shown unto them which have been shown

unto you . . . they never would again have dwindled in unbelief."

Nathan watched the flying arrows and the falling stones and the figure of Samuel that could not be touched or broken by all their missiles. Something welled in him greater than anything he had ever known. He looked past Samuel to the sky. Who was He, who watched over his servant. How should a man know his voice? Nathan touched his breast. It was all quiet within, like earth

when the planting had been done, and there was now the time for the seed to rest in the darkness and grow.

He watched Samuel leap from the wall, his speaking done. Captains and their men rushed toward the city gates. Nathan watched them go. He had no fear they would seize Samuel. He turned to go home to his mother. In his mind he saw Samuel, his mission done, speeding back to his own lands, and his own people.

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