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Mulek of Zarahemla, Chapter III

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Abstract: This series is a novel based on the fictional character Mulek, an inhabitant of the city of Zarahemla during the war between Amalickiah and Moroni. The third part consists of chapter III.



"Amalickiah, now king of the Lamanites, raged and cursed and swore a great oath against Moroni."

SYNOPSIS

MULEK and his servant, Omer, were hunting when Mulek was rushed by a raging boar and his leg severely injured before Omer could kill the wounded animal. He thought of the strange perversity of fate that had put him who was entitled to be a ruler of the region in an inferior position. He loved Zarahemla. As he entered the city, he was amused to note that one of the priests, Shiblon, brother of Helaman, chief high priest over the church, was addressing a crowd. Mulek could not resist mocking him, asking whether he was indeed a prophet. Shiblon answered: "Thou hast asked whether I am a prophet, I will tell thee. If it be God's will, thou shalt know this thing when thou goest without friends to applaud, without resources for wickedness, sick in body and soul, humbled to the dust." Mulek shrugged his shoulders and limped away, thinking of Amalickiah, a man of tremendous powers and winning manners who was stirring up widespread interest in a reform of government. Moroni, young chief captain of the armies of the Nephites, had taken his own cloak and

made it into a banner, calling it the Title of Liberty, and calling on all to rise to its defense. Mulek found himself consumed with jealousy. Before he could join with Amalickiah, he received a note from Sarah, who had him drugged so that he would be kept from the folly of joining in the rebellion.

CHAPTER III

MORONI had known what he was doing when he called for a covenant of allegiance from the people—nor was it a day too soon. Already Amalickiah had developed his plans to the point where he presented a grave threat to the security of the nation. Given a little more time, he must certainly have thrown the nation into vicious civil war, if not positive slavery. When the young captain moved with such suddenness, the traitor's plans were thwarted. Nevertheless, he called

MULEK

his captains and their men and made a show of opposition.

When, however, his forces were confronted by Moroni and his Nephite army, he abandoned his plan to fight, left his soldiers to treat with Moroni as best they could, and with a few favorites fled to the land of Nephi and the Lamanites. Moroni spared those of his followers who would sign the covenant. The few who would not accept the gracious offer were forthwith executed as enemies of the nation.

Moroni then threw himself into a program with more zeal than had

ever driven even Mulek himself, but it was a different kind from that pursued by the young idler.

Moroni wholly forgot himself in the need of his people. He began to strengthen the fortifications of the land. Walls were built about most of the cities. Embankments of earth were thrown up everywhere, with fences on top of them, and even pickets atop the fences. Along the walls the men constructed towers from which they could fight with little danger to themselves.

THROUGHOUT the entire land of Zarahemla there were scenes of such feverish activity as the land had never before known. New arms were made, many of them of new kinds; armor was forged everywhere. Soldiers were recruited and trained. The trails on which the Lamanites might come were blocked off with obstacles to progress. Nothing was left undone which would in any way contribute to the security of the people of the Nephites.

In all this Moroni was the moving spirit, a national favorite, a hero of the first importance. And in all this Mulek was forgotten. He became at first piqued and peevish, then angry and stubborn.

What was Moroni, that he should be idolized? He was not wealthy; he was of lower birth than Mulek; his education was no better; his talents of no higher order. Yet he

some years before utterly destroyed by the Lamanites, was by the time of Moroni about half rebuilt when one day there descended upon it, an army of the dark warriors from the south.

But this time the city stood. Her defenses were too novel, too strong, her defenders too well armed and protected. The Lamanites fought with fury, throwing themselves hopelessly and uselessly against the ramparts. They could do nothing but die, and in the end they gave up their design, returning to their own land.

AMALICKIAH, now king of the Lamanites, raged and cursed and swore a great oath against Moroni. From that time on it became a race to determine which nation could work faster and more effectively.

Moroni was everywhere. He went from land to land and from city to city, encouraging, instructing, pleading. He strengthened fortresses, repaired walls, gathered soldiers, built cities.

In the south and east, near the territories of the Lamanites, he caused a lovely city to be constructed which was named in his honor. Other cities also were thrown up throughout the land.

Mulek too went about, with equal energy, dancing, boating, hunting, playing. There were some who still consorted with him and shared his

national horizon? Mulek was filled with bitterness.

One day it occurred to him that perhaps he should alter his activities. Perhaps if he contributed something to the national effort, which seemed to be the whole concern of the people, it would help him to regain some of his lost reputation.

He began then, not, indeed, to work—he did not like to work—but to buy himself the approval of the people. He gave support and sponsorship to any and all movements that required money rather than effort. He spent extravagantly. He courted favor; he sought suggestions that would enable him to exhibit evidences of his new-found enthusiasm. His silver patriotism became golden. Wherever Moroni went to set in motion his wise projects, there also Mulek went to give them his backing. He came to welcome comparison, to encourage it.

Yet the one who cared nothing for fame came to be universally acclaimed, while he who lived for it only came in time to realize that it could not be purchased. Such is the fancy of the public mind.

One day there came into the land and into the capital a report that filled everyone with wonder and with panic. The Lamanites, with Amalickiah at their head—proud as a peacock and bellowing like a bull—were coming into the southern cities and lands, coming in such numbers that their strength could not be even estimated. They came like wolves upon the flock. They flowed like some tremendous flood suddenly let loose. Nothing could stand before them.

For the first time in their entire national history the Nephites were in danger of being utterly defeated.

FOR a long time after that never-to-be-forgotten evening Mulek was of two minds regarding Sarah and the basis on which he should meet her again after she had prevented his meeting Amalickiah. For days he pondered the problem, during which time he remained coldly aloof from her. Elements in the problem were extremely delicate and subtle. There seemed little doubt that Sarah had saved him from public censure, if nothing more, from probable loss of favor, which would have been extremely distasteful to him, from possible imprisonment or

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of Zarahemla

By J. N. WASHBURN

was in every mind, his name on every tongue. And Mulek, to whom adulation was as the breath of life, was forgotten.

Mulek fretted and fumed, trying to think up new ways of making himself popular. Was it always to be Moroni? Did he have to hear the name everywhere he went? It was maddening.

It was well that Moroni had taken thought for his people's safety, for the Lamanites too were busy with their preparations for conquest.

The western city of Ammonihah,

activities, but the old excitement was lacking. The stimulation which had formerly fed his spirit was almost entirely gone. Mulek could not fail to observe the universal respect, almost reverence, with which the captain was regarded. He was unable to understand why he should suffer so in comparison with the other. Was he not as handsome? Was he too not known far and wide in the land? Why should he so suddenly and so completely pass into insignificance simply because a favorite of the chief judge moved across the

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even death. Should he not thank her for this and bless her devotion?

On the other hand, he resented strongly, not his having missed the appointment, but the manner in which he missed it. What should a man do under such circumstances? At last he convinced himself that he had more for which to be angry than to be thankful. He felt that he had been humiliated far more deeply than public reproach could ever have humiliated him. He had been taken for a fool and a coward. Had he been publicly disgraced, he could have returned stare for stare; he could have been disdainful and superior, could have fed his spirit by justification, by fighting back, by making explanations. All this was now denied him. No one knew what had happened except Sarah and the servants. To see the knowing looks in their eyes would be insupportable.

It was his first real humiliation, the first for which he had no brilliant answer, the first he could not carry off with a high hand, and he felt monstrously affronted. The thing had been so presumptuous, so clever, so lacking in understanding.

His pride had been mocked. Henceforth, in his own eyes, and worse still, in the eyes of Sarah, in the eyes of the too-knowing servants he would be a child, a chattel, a piece of property. It could not pass; it was a mortal insult.

He put his wits to work at once on a scheme to pay her fully and in kind, something equally subtle and devastating.

THERE was, to the north and east of the city, a long stretch where the Sidon was wide, clear, and smooth, a restful body, as if, after its rough descent from the southern mountains, the stream settled down for a little time to catch its breath before battling with the eastern sea. It was a shimmering vista that none saw or passed without lingering. The cool blue water stirred in one and all, dreams, thoughts, hopes, or fears.

It was there that the people went for relaxation and rest, for sport, and public notice. Bathing, boating, sunning, gossiping were the time-honored pastimes. There the rich went to display their finery; the beautiful, to bask in notoriety; the

poor and unfortunate, to dream dreams of better times to come, to praise the beautiful and envy the notorious.

Mulek, his plans maturing, went among his fellows to put his program into operation. He called on a friend named Laban, one of the wealthy young men of the city, who greeted him warmly, and discussed with him current matters.

Suddenly Mulek said, "I am told that you have but lately bought a new boat." Laban's interest flamed.

"Yes," he answered with enthusiasm, "in the land of Bountiful is a man called Hagoth who builds most cunningly craft of all kinds. This is a new one, recently designed and constructed. It is beautiful beyond words; I could not come away without it."

"Laban," cried Mulek in despair and in ecstasy, "you fan the flame of my desire. You provoke my curiosity till I can hardly contain myself. Is this new boat fast?"

"Fast?" Laban's eyes fairly burned. "It is the fastest thing afloat."

"Do you think so? Is it faster than my Sarah?"

The lights danced in Laban's eyes. "Yes," he cried, "she is faster even than your Sarah. I will wager on it."

Mulek put out his hand. "I will wager you ten thousand *senines* that your darling cannot defeat my Sarah."

Laban clapped his hands and jumped from his seat. He was as ardent a sportsman as the other but had far less presence and dignity.

"I will accept your wager," he declared. "When shall we make the trial of our beauties? Shall it be seven days hence?"

Mulek seemed to consider.

"Not so soon," he replied after a moment. "I have a few minor repairs to make on the Sarah. It will take somewhat longer than that." In the end he named a date, and Laban, though impatient, willingly agreed to it.

"I will do it," he said excitedly. "Such a race as it will be!"

Mulek's reluctance to meet Laban in a week was not due to any repairs that his boat needed. It was ready to sail at a moment's notice.

The thing that was not ready was the background. It was not a boat race Mulek was planning; it was

These Times

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should undertake the task, but, only, which agency of the government? People who want to understand these times might take their bearings from this vantage point. Shall we say, alas for the individualist theory of economic enterprise? On the international front pure individualism meant free trade. And despite lip service to Adam Smith and the disciples of economic liberty, private businesses have hemmed themselves into a net of their own making! Acceptance of *laissez faire* in the purest sense means that the State abandon self-sufficiency; instead of freedom within tariff or other regulatory walls, the doctrine insisted that the individual be free to cross boundaries with his goods. But the nationalist theory has triumphed, generally. Can we save what is left of economic individualism?

CURIOSLY enough, the Marshall Plan, a state enterprise, has this as one of its major objectives! In logic this is paradoxical. But life itself is a paradox. Perhaps the current American policy embraces enough contradictions to conform to the contradictions of life in the American and European communities, and thus salvage some measure of economic individualism, with its political and spiritual benefits, by means of governmental action! But more important it is to remember that governmental action by the American government should always partake of an unusually significant nature. The reasons for this cannot be enlarged here, but they are summarized in John Taylor's phrase previously referred to in this column, that "the Constitution of the United States . . . was the entering wedge for the introduction of a new era, and in it were introduced principles for the birth and organization of a new world." Perhaps the Marshall Plan can achieve the noble destiny of inaugurating a new chapter, in service to mankind, of that inspired charter—the Constitution of the United States. There could be no loftier political objective than this, properly understood, whether from federalism as a world pattern, or civil liberty for the individual.

something far more sensational, something vastly more to be considered. It was something that required more than a week, for in order for his plans to mature fully it was necessary to have publicity, to have word of the race get about, to have the assurance that everyone who was anyone would be on hand.

(To be continued)