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Mulek of Zarahemla, Chapter V

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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 fifth part consists of chapter V.

By J. N. WASHBURN

manners, who had caused a rupture in the country. Moroni, young chief captain of the armies of the Nephites, had taken his own cloak and made it into a banner, naming 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 to come to her home. There she drugged him so that he would be kept from the folly of joining in the rebellion. Amalickiah, now king of the Lamanites, raged and swore a great oath against Moroni, who went everywhere, encouraging, instructing, pleading with the people. At first Mulek followed Moroni, trying to win adulation by supporting Moroni's projects. Always in the back of his mind there rankled the thought of what Sarah had done, how she had belittled him in the sight of the servants. Even though she had saved him from public censure, he must find some way to humble her and win back his prestige. Mulek saw the opportunity to do this by challenging a sportsman named Laban to a boat race. This would assure a large gathering among the people who sought relief from the political disturbances. To the race came Sarah in all her resplendent apparel, but she left in chagrin, for the name of the boat had been changed from "Sarah" to "Zorah." Even the success of this rebuke to Sarah did not make Mulek content, for he still was eager to win the approval of the girl Zorah whom he had seen. He made a trip to her father's house only to learn that she had gone to the city of Mulek to visit her Uncle Amram, a famous boatmaker. Because he hoped to see her, he sought out Amram and ordered an expensive boat. However when he saw Zorah, he, who was ordinarily so fluent in speech, found himself tongue-tied. He left, resolving to win her.

CHAPTER V

MULEK lived over and over again that first moment when he had seen Zorah in her uncle's house, when his heart had seemed to turn over, and he had struggled to keep from stammering, when his usual pleasantries had failed, when he was for once altogether unsure of himself.

He pictured again her perfection, the uprightness of her posture, the fearlessness of her outlook. He would have given anything to be sure that she returned, in any degree whatever, the affection he felt for her.

Seldom had any commander weighed more carefully the problems of attack and defense than he did the probabilities before him. Seldom had any navigator charted more painstakingly a dangerous course. He who had always obtained what he wanted with wealth, influence, and the force of personality, now found himself almost helpless in the presence of a commonplace situation. He was reduced to finding ways and means of meeting the girl alone, since in the ordinary way of things their paths would not be likely to cross, and were he to go to Amram's house and ask to see her, she could easily refuse him. He was now threshing about in his mind for an excuse to meet the young girl.



"To judge, one needs a knowledge of the law. To govern requires a knowledge of men and wide experience. These are not learned in the same school nor often found in the same man."

MULEK of Zarahemla

SYNOPSIS

MULEK loved Zarahemla, the city where his forefathers had ruled, although he could not help dwelling frequently on the

strange events that had changed the country from a kingdom to a republic, ruled now by judges. Mulek mocked the priests of the church and thought of the rebel Amalickiah, a man of tremendous powers and winning

It seemed hours that he wrestled with his problem. It held for him all the zest of the chase, the challenge of an intricate mathematical manipulation, the pressure of a great need. Then in a flash of what he thought was positive inspiration, he found his answer and was amazed at its simplicity. He simply went outside, and in the street found a boy whom he engaged to watch the boatmaker's house and report to him when Zorah left the place unaccompanied. The urchin winked at him, and Mulek, for perhaps the first time in his life, felt guilty. It made him angry, and only with an effort did he refrain from striking the boy. Afterward he wondered at this and could not understand. His business done, he returned to his house to wait with what patience he could muster the moment he sought.

DAYS passed, the longest and most tiresome days he could remember. He was fuming with inactivity, yet he dared not leave the house for fear that the summons would come during his absence. It was unthinkable that he, Mulek, could have fallen to such a state. Still he waited, though ashamed of himself for his circumstances and his tactics.

Then one evening the boy rushed in to report that Zorah had left the house of her uncle and had gone alone into the city. Mulek, adorning himself in his finest, went out quickly.

An hour passed, and another, before he saw her coming along the street, a basket on her arm, and his heart bounded. Then he felt a keen sense of disappointment, of resentment even, for she was not alone. To such a state had he come, that this simple fact made him furious, but even as he strove to meet the new development, the girl's companion turned aside, and Zorah walked on alone.

Mulek became suddenly confused. What should he do? The last thing in the world he wanted was to appear ridiculous. That would be the ultimate proof of his folly.

He looked quickly over the situation, the streets in relation to each other, and selected an intersection at which he might seem to be meeting her by accident. To this point he hurried.

A few minutes later he almost ran into her as he came around a corner. He apologized profusely and sincerely, for he had not intended actually to startle her. As she began again to move, he fell into step beside her.

It would be hard to say which was the more ill at ease. For a time neither spoke while both tried to appraise the situation in order to know how to act, what to say. The brilliant conversationalist, the fluent talker eventually began to speak about the weather.

"Yea," Zorah answered his first attempt at talk, "the weather is good though somewhat warmer than comfort demands."

"Do you think it will storm?"

"It is not by any means improbable."

"How are you?" he then asked,

realizing as he did so how weak and pointless it sounded, however earnestly he had meant it.

"I am very well."

"How are your uncle and your aunt?"

"They are in perfect health, as also are my cousins."

"How were your father and mother when last you heard from them?"

"They were without complaint—and my brothers and sisters, too."

"Do you think much longer to remain in the city of Mulek?"

"Only until circumstances make it expedient to depart."

Mulek reflected gloomily that the conversation was not going very well. Certainly he was not showing to advantage, the thing he most desired.

"Do you think," he asked then, almost in desperation, "that your uncle has begun work on my boat yet?" The girl suddenly lost much of her stiffness.

"I am sure he has worked on the plans," she answered with unmistakable interest. "He is so careful with all the details. He could make more boats and earn more money, but he will not permit gain to spoil his work."

"That is why I chose him to make my boat," Mulek lied. "I am eager to procure a vessel that will be able to defeat Laban's Gull."

Zorah smiled, and Mulek wondered whether she knew all about his race and its sensational ending. However, she did not make any reference to it, certainly not to his changing the name of the boat.

"This will be a beautiful boat, and exceedingly fast on the water," she replied, instead.

Here, thought the man, was an opening at last.

"Will you go with me upon the river when it is finished?" he asked and realized suddenly that he bungled.

"Nay," the girl responded with spirit, "that I will never do."

"And why not? Am I, then, so undesirable a companion?"

"You are a wicked, idle man," she told him bluntly, "and I fear you."

For a minute Mulek could not answer; he was too surprised to think. Then in the gathering darkness he smiled. He had at least put his feet into the conversational stream, and even though he found it cold, he began to feel all at once that he was more sure of his way. It was at least his proper element. Moreover, he was far from sure she had meant what she said. One could not always tell with a woman.

"I have always supposed that women like wicked men," he ventured.

"Only those you have known. It does not follow that all women like wicked men just because some men prefer wicked women."

MULEK could hardly keep from exclaiming; it was such a thoroughly good rejoinder. It proved, as he had known from the first, that the girl was worth cultivating. He would have to

think fast and hard to find an adequate retort. But Mulek was not given the opportunity to show how well he might have answered, for as Mulek and his lovely companion turned the corner before Amram's ample house, they came upon a group of excited men and women, all talking at once, with a vast deal of gesturing. They stopped in puzzled surprise.

"What has transpired?" the young woman inquired.

"Well might you ask, girl," Amram replied with heavy emphasis. "There is always trouble enough, enough and to spare, it seems."

"But what is it?"

"If it is not politicians," the old man answered ponderously, "it is robbers or Lamanites; if not they, it is something else."

Beginning to doubt whether Amram would ever get to the answer, another replied to the girl's question.

"A quarrel has broken out between the people of Lehi and Morianton. Those of Lehi, not being in the wrong, and not wishing to slay or be slain, have gone to the camp of Moroni to seek protection and justice. Where it will end, none can say."

"Once the commander takes the matter up," another put in, "it will go hard with Morianton. I would not be of his city tonight for all his property."

"Yes," added still another, "Moroni will find a way to deal with him. Never have I seen another like our captain."

"It is true," Zorah said all at once, and her voice was eloquent as her words. "How I do envy her who calls him her lord." She turned suddenly into the house to escape the curious looks that were directed at her.

THE dispute between the cities of Lehi and Morianton became serious for Morianton and some of his followers, for it cost them their lives. Prompt and decisive action by the military leaders prevented it from becoming a new threat to the nation's welfare at a time when there were already too many problems to be solved.

Mulek for one was wholly unconcerned about these matters. He had other interests, and to these he gave his undivided attention.

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MARK E. PETERSEN

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Americans, willing to surrender to the tyranny of a cigaret? Are you willing to allow a cigaret to determine in such large measure the kind of life you are going to live? Are you going to allow a cigaret to choose the kind of friends you have, the kind of person you will marry—even the kind of children you may have? Are you, as a young Latter-day Saint, willing to allow a cigaret to determine your attitude toward God?

Let me ask you one other thing: What do you think of religion, anyway? Is it worth while? Is it worth the trouble we go to? Does it do any good in the world? Or would we be better off without it?

MULEK OF ZARAHLEMLA

(Continued from page 297)

WHEN he heard Zorah's heartfelt praise of Moroni, his first reaction was one of surprise. Then, as he thought about it—and for a long time he thought of little else—he experienced an overpowering sense of envy, of jealousy, even, and of bitterness. Was he never to be free of this sense of his inferiority? Was he always to be reminded, in one way or another, of the popularity of the captain?

He could not remember when he had ever wanted anything with half the fierceness of his desire for the boat-maker's kinswoman. He desired her more than he would have thought it possible to desire anything.

Under ordinary circumstances he would have been content to wait, to use his influence, his name, and his wealth to win her to him, but with a woman like this he did not know what to do.

Mulek considered himself a wise man, and certainly he had learned much from experience as well as from study. What he did not realize was that there were countless forces, issues, principles, of which he knew nothing at all, much as he could have told about other matters.

He knew everything about a designing woman; he knew nothing about an unspoiled one. He knew to the last senine the power of money, if not its value; he was ignorant of the fact that there were people to whom wealth was relatively unimportant, and who would put forth little effort to obtain it. He was a master in the use of intrigue; he was unaware that there was but one approach to the unreasonableness and sweetness of the unstudied and spontaneous motives, the inherent yearnings of the human heart. Knowing so much, he forgot that he knew so little.

Moroni! Always Moroni! He considered it all again. What did Moroni have that he did not have? The name *Mulek* sounded as well as the name *Moroni*. Moroni sprang suddenly from an obscure family. Mulek was

I ONCE read an advertisement which asked this question: "How would you like to live in a town in which there were no churches?" And then it listed the crime and the violence and the debauchery and the filth and the heartbreak and the sorrow and the disappointment associated with persons who reject the soul-elevating, character-building influence of true religion. Would you like to live in a town in which there were no churches? Bring it right down to your own case and ask yourself about it. Would you like to live a life in which there was no religion? Do you really want the degrading influence of the irreligious? That influence is just as deadly for an individual as it is for a whole town.

Choose for yourself: Do you want to live a life without God? The cigaret

the acknowledged leader of a long line of kings. Moroni was young; he himself was younger still. Moroni was well-proportioned and good to look at. Mulek was considered the most prepossessing young man in Zarahemla. Moroni was a forceful speaker. He himself was not only forceful; he was also eloquent. Moroni was learned; so was he. Mulek's rancor grew until it hurt.

Unable to find the solution he courted, unable to remain longer in the inaction of the city of Mulek, he at once returned to the capital, hoping that there something might happen to resolve his doubts and remove his disquiet. He had as yet no plans, but he did have a purpose. He would find a way to win Zorah's approval, and with good fortune, her affection.

DESTINY was awaiting him; on the very day of his return to Zarahemla Chief Judge Nephihah died, an old man full of honor, and was mourned by the people. He was buried with ceremonies that told of the nation's profound regard.

Within a few days public announcement was made that his son Pahoran was to succeed him as chief judge and governor over the land. People heard the news, commented on it, and went their ways. It was as good a choice as any.

One day Mulek was walking along the street when he met, entirely by accident, an acquaintance he had not seen for a long time. His name was Pachus, and he had been among those followers of Amalickiah who, beaten in battle, accepted the amnesty of the government and took the pledge to keep the peace.

Pachus was a man of ordinary appearance and ordinary faculties with these exceptions: he was almost supernaturally cunning. He could almost read another's thoughts. He could probe a matter to its center. He was full of restless energy, admired by many, trusted by few, loved by none.

He inquired with seeming casualness into Mulek's doings since their last

would like you to. But remember, you can never live successfully without the Lord. So many have tried, and all have failed.

And so I come back to the question with which I began: Have you ever really considered what a cigaret means to a Latter-day Saint? You who smoke now, do not make the mistake of supposing that the Church is against you, because it is not. It only desires your welfare, and it hopes and prays for the day when you will declare your independence from the slavery of nicotine. And you who do not smoke, before you take that first cigaret ask yourself, "Will it help me or hurt me?" Think it over carefully, and may God guide you in your thinking, I earnestly pray for you, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

meeting. He was far too wise to make any reference to Mulek's having failed to stay with the cause he had espoused. Mulek spoke civilly to him, and briefly, for he did not like the man. But Pachus would not be put off.

"What do you think of the new government?" he asked.

"I know him but slightly, having traveled a different road, but he is perhaps as competent to judge as any. None can deny that he knows the law." Pachus considered a moment.

"To judge, yes," he responded, "to judge. It is true he is acquainted with the law, none better. But how to govern?" Mulek frowned.

"I do not know what you mean," he complained. "Is it not to govern to judge?"

"By no means," ejaculated Pachus promptly and emphatically. "To judge, one needs a knowledge of the law. To govern requires a knowledge of men and wide experience. These are not learned in the same school nor often found in the same man."

"There is more both before and after this," Mulek guessed shrewdly, "and I for one will have nothing to do with it."

"And you a man of influence and importance?" Pachus was amazed. "Is no one to have enough interest in our nation's affairs to give thought to those who will administer them? I am astounded."

"Let me refresh your memory on certain facts of history that you, better than most, should know, and knowing, consider."

"MANY years ago, when your ancestor Zarahemla was king in this very city, Mosiah First, and a handful of followers came into the capital from the land of Nephi, whence they had been driven as outcasts. I do not know by what means or magic he did it, but Mosiah gained ascendancy over Zarahemla, the king."

"That day the line of Zarahemla, descendant of Zedekiah, was broken. The true kings have been common men

ever since, and you, my unfortunate friend, are one of them."

Mulek was by that time listening with greedy interest and was impatient when the other stopped speaking.

"All this I know," he urged. "What is there more?"

"When Mosiah died, his son Benjamin became king in his place. Now, I do not say that King Benjamin was not a good king, but at the same time I do contend that there were others who might have been quite as good. King Benjamin lived to a ripe old age, and his son, Mosiah II, ruled in his stead.

"The second Mosiah reigned thirty-three years. One day his four sons, Ammon, Aaron, Omner, and Himni, asked permission to go on a mission to the Lamanites, that they might preach to them. The king granted their request, and they went up to the land of Nephi and there remained fourteen years. Had this not happened, Aaron, the second son, would in all probability have become the successor to his father, for Ammon was wholly devoted to the ministry.

"When Mosiah became faced with the problem of someone to rule in his place, he was uncertain what to do. What would happen when his sons returned and found a stranger on the throne? Would they not cause civil war in having him deposed? That is what the king feared, and fearing it, he proposed that a system of judges be provided to take the place of the rule of the kings. The people liked the idea and voted to adopt it.

"A young man named Alma was chosen to be the first chief judge. Alma, however, held a double responsibility and a double trust. He was already high priest over all the Church. In consequence of this, the burden being too great, he relinquished the judgment-seat to this Nephiah who has just passed away."

"Yes, all this I know," replied Mulek thoughtfully, "but what is the point of it all?"

"There are two points," Pachus responded, holding up two fingers. "The first is that this system of judges was but a temporary measure, a thing which you and many another seem to have missed. It was not intended that the kings be done away forever; nowhere is it so stated.

"That is the first point. The second is that, even granting that the judges were to be permanent, there was no mention of a governor."

"But did not Nephiah govern?"

"Yes, after a manner of speaking, but never did he call himself by the

title of governor, nor did Alma. This sudden accession of titles and power does not sit well. It strikes at the very foundations of the institution of freedom."

"Have not the people agreed to it?"

"What people? A few have signified their agreement, as a few would approve the burning of their own homes. There are many others who are open in their displeasure."

"Open, you say? Then it is not treason they contemplate?"

Pachus became monstrously indignant. He bristled up.

"Treason? Who talks of treason? May not men speak of the welfare of their sacred nation without being called traitors? What a pass is it coming to! Treason? Is it more treasonable for one to inquire into his people's case than for another to exercise power without sanction of law?"

"I had not thought of it."

"And there are many others who have not thought of it."

"I do not doubt there is much reason in what you say. Are there, do you think, many who are of this mind?"

"I do not know of large numbers, and many of prominence, next only to yourself in station, who earnestly talk of these matters. Had he not added the title of governor, it might have passed, but where is it to end? His grandfather was a farmer; his father, chief judge. He is governor. Will his son, perhaps, be king?" Mulek was startled.

"King?"

"Who can say?"

"King!"

"It was the word I used."

"In three generations!"

"While all the time we have among us royal blood from the old world."

"King!" Mulek kept repeating the word as if it fascinated him.

"I trust I never live to see it."

"A king, Pachus?"

"Nay, fool, an upstart king! Right willingly would I see the rightful king rule over this nation."

"The matter can be settled by the people?"

"Nay, 'can' is the wrong word; 'must' is the better one."

"If it is so determined, then is he not guilty of treason but is rightfully the king."

MULEK suddenly realized that he had been speaking loudly, that others were listening. He blushed and lowered his voice.

"Nay, Mulek, fear not to shout it out. It is thus we shall make known our desires. We have talked long enough at this time, but do you consider rightly of this business. Upon our next meeting we shall discuss it further." As Pachus turned to go, he added, in a lower tone, "There is in all this land but one whose wealth, breeding, position, attainments, and blood entitle him to the throne of this nation." He turned aside and left Mulek standing on the street, staring stupidly after him.

(To be continued)

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