Mulek of Zarahemla, Chapter VII

Author(s): Jesse N. Washburn
Source: *Improvement Era*, Vol. 51, No. 7 (July 1948)
Published by: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
Page(s): 442–443

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 seventh part consists of chapter VII.
Mulek loved Zarahemla, the city of his forefathers, where two factions were striving for power; one ruled by Ama-
luckiah, a man of tremendous powers and winning manners, who had caused a rupture in the country, and Moroni, young chief captain of the armies of the Nephites, who went everywhere, encouraging, instructing, palling with the people to unite in the country's defense. Accustomed to receiving the adulation of the people, Mulek was consumed with jealousy at his fall from favor. In order to call attention to himself he had mocked the priests of the church and allied himself with Amalickiah. Then, to win their praise he decided to support Mo-
roni's projects. Mulek was eager to win the favor of the girl, Zarah, niece of Am-
ram, a boatmaker. He devised ways of meeting her, but Zarah was too intent on the political unrest to be interested in him, and was lavish in his praise of Moroni, which added to Mulek's envy. Was he ne-
ever to be free of this sense of his inferiority? But he determined in some way to win
Zarah's approval. When, therefore, one of his friends approached him with the idea that he become king—even as his forefa-
thers had been kings—he entertained the thought. A general election was called for
and granted by Pahoran, chief judge, as to which kind of government was the more
desirable. In the voting the king-men lost,
at the very moment when Amalickiah led the Lamanites against the land. When the king-men were asked to support the gov-
ernment, they refused. Beside himself with worry, Pahoran sent word to Moroni, in
the land of Bountiful to come posthaste to the defense of Zarahemla.

Chapter VII

Moroni, fearful of the outcome, did what a wise commander could do, and it was little
enough. He left Teancum and Lehi in charge of matters in the east and went with all speed to the defense of the capital, to pull down the pride and the nobility of the king-men, as he put it.

Meanwhile the king-men were also busy. Pachus and Mulek set about gathering their forces and preparing their fortifications. Cer-
tainly they were not to be taken lightly. There were thousands of the king-men, and they were bitter and determined. Knowing they were to fight for their lives, they provided every advantage within their power. Nor did they lack for money, weapons, or food.

One evening word came that Moroni was marching on the city and would arrive next day with his army. The king-men took up their position and waited the coming of the captain.

Mulek, fuming and fretting in the darkness, his dreams dead, his fine
prospects, worse than gone, was literally hot with anger and mad
with mortification and disappoint-
ment. To make things worse for
him, his ultimate degradation, if it was to come at all, would come at the hands of Moroni whom he blamed for most of his troubles.

It was insupportable!

He felt a tap on his shoulder and turned to see a soldier standing in
the darkness at his side.

“What is it?” he asked.

“A woman is waiting and wishes to speak with you,” the other in-
formed him.

“A woman?”

In surprise he followed the man through the streets to the extreme
limit of the position occupied by Pachus' forces. There guards pre-
vented the entrance of any of whom they were not sure. There the woman
was waiting. Even though Mul-
ek's eyes were accustomed to the
dark, he could not for a moment
guess at her identity, so closely was she veiled. Then he recognized her. It was Zarah!

For one brief instant all his heavy-
ness left him. The weights fell
from his shoulders; the lines left his
brow. He felt an upsurge of pure
happiness, of instant relief. He
wanted to take her in his arms, but she was so still and unrespon-
sive that he dared not touch her at
first. At length he took her hand and
found it cold as a stone.

"Zarah," he whispered, "is it real-
ly you? If there is any heaven, you
stand at the door of it." For a mo-
ment she did not speak but at last
found her voice.

"What mad thing is this you do, Mulek?" she cried. "What utterly
mad thing? Do you not know that it is not death alone you invite but
dishonor and loss of all hopes and
prospects? Oh, I could not have believed it of you." She turned her
head so that the tears fell upon her
sleeve like drops of rain.

Mulek was overcome. But wheth-
er he would have told her that all he had done had been done for her, he
was never to know. Whether he would even then have turned back
had she asked, it was likewise not to be determined. What more either
might have said could not be known, for at that moment the girl, over-
whelmed, withdrew.

"Good-bye, Mulek," she said and was gone, as she had come, alone,
in the darkened street.

For a moment Mulek stood, quite
without volition or command. When in the end he realized that she was
gone, he knew the full weight of
despair and hopelessness. His
strong shoulders shook with sobs;
and hot tears, unheeded, rushed in a torrent down his face. For the first
time in his life he was utterly alone
and poignantly aware of his loneli-
ess.

Moroni reached the capital in a
towering rage. Had it not been
for this, he would have faced
the king-men under even greater
difficulties than those under which
he already labored, for with all the earnestness of his heart he hated having to destroy his own people.
Only the depth of their wrong could
avail to make him forget that inborn
reluctance.

As it was, he fought as he had
never fought before. He threw his
forces against those of Pachus with all the strength he had. Pachus for
his part had the advantage of posi-
tion but lacked the moral support of
a righteous cause.

With terrible slaughter the con-

flict moved back and forth with first
one side winning and then the other.
From house to house they fought,
and from street to street. The
wounded and dead lay everywhere; cries of the sufferers made the day hideous; and the city and its environs, red with intermingled blood of rebel and patriot alike. Brothers, fathers, and sons became enemies within an hour and lashed and struggled powerfully to destroy each other.

Pachus went everywhere, encouraging his men, pushing them to furious efforts with his praise. He kept up their flagging hopes with new promises manufactured on the spot. Neither truth nor logic had any part in his words, but he gave ample proof of his earnestness in the fury and efficiency with which he struck.

"Come, friends, patriots all," he would shout to any he saw faltering, "we bear the burden of the oppressed. Will you have your children grow up slaves?" There was nothing within his power that he did not offer and deliver on that fateful day.

Moroni, too, was like a fountain from which sprang rich streams of strength. He performed surpassing deeds of valor and of wisdom. Thrilled by his unexampled courage, astounded at his strength in time of need, his men outdid themselves in feats of greatness.

"For the oppressed!" the traitors would shout. "For the fatherland!" the defenders would answer, and in this way they distinguished each other, for they fought every man for himself when, how, and where he would. There was little organization; each man was his own commander and command.

Such slashing and screaming as there were! Swords and shields, spears and arrowheads reflected the sunshine until stained to the point where they shed nothing but ruddy drops like rain upon the sudden earth.

Before nightfall one might have said that death had painted a picture and called it "Desolation."

Mulek and his expert blade were known far and near. He was like a mechanical device, as dispassionate, as unrelenting. He had forgotten how to think. In slaughter he found the only release for the tempest of his soul. For hours he persisted. In spite of wishing to lose his life, in spite of inviting the strokes of every weapon, in spite of being in the thick of the unspeakable fray from beginning to end, he was preserved as by a miracle.

The sun rose higher and higher and seemed somehow to govern the fighting, for with it at its zenith the action reached its highest point and began to wane with the lengthening shadows. The king-men, by then aware of the hopelessness of their cause, started to desert or go over to the enemy.

Moroni, heartened wonderfully by these defections, after a period when he had begun to fear his battle was in vain, called upon his last resources and asked his men for renewed efforts. And they responded nobly with such a burst of vigor as took the remaining spirit out of the rebels. These, in ever-increasing numbers, laid down their weapons and begged only for rest.

Mulek fought to the end—the last to quit—a giant of destruction! Even Moroni could not refrain from expressing admiration for his skill and strength even while he deplored their having been thrown away in a project of anarchy. Weary as night, senseless as a stone, Mulek, under heavy guard, was dragged off to a cold and lonely cell.

(To be continued)