



***BEN.
E. RICH***

***MR. DURANT
OF SALT
LAKE CITY,
"THAT
MORMON"***



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PREFACE.

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Mormonism is a subject which has been handled by many authors. Some have written in its favor, with prayerful hearts, seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit as their honest convictions were recorded; while others have declared against the Mormons and the man who was the instrument, in the hands of God, of founding their faith. A few of the latter class have been honest in their attacks, believing, perhaps, that they were doing the Lord's will in opposing it; but the majority have been actuated by hatred in all they have said on the subject.

The author of this work has endeavored to present, in plain and simple words, the faith of the Latter-day Saints, with a desire to aid and interest the young men of Mormondom, who have had no missionary experience, and to fit them to make known their belief to the nations of the earth, should they be called upon for that purpose.

If this book shall benefit them, and give others a better conception of the Latter-day Saints and their religion, the object in publishing it will have been attained.

THE AUTHOR.

OGDEN, February, 1893.

MR. DURANT OF SALT LAKE.

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CHAPTER I.

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THE OLD AND THE NEW.

There are few if any cities or towns of any consequence in the vast territory known to poesy as the Sunny South, that do not speak in every street corner, in almost every building, and even through the individuals themselves, of the wondrous changes wrought by the great civil war. Those who knew that Sunny South before the sanguinary struggle, and have since looked upon it, will most readily appreciate the force of this statement; while those who have not seen it, need only be told that where villages existed then, now thriving towns arise, or bustling municipalities; elegant mansions have supplanted log huts or other indifferent abodes of men; the railway has displaced the stage coach for all time; newspapers abound where before these were almost unknown, and—greatest boon of all—the auction block, whereon human merchandise was publicly vended, exists only as a memory which itself is rapidly vanishing before the pressure of modern progress and a better civilization. In one respect at least, however, there has been little, if any, change, and that is in regard to the best feature of all among the many that are commendable in the true Southerner—the stranger or wayfarer is received with the same unaffected hospitality as of yore, and is at liberty, within reasonable limits, to avail himself of all the conveniences and enjoyments of whatever home he may find himself the guest.

Notwithstanding their hospitality, the people of the South are usually disposed to be suspicious of strangers until well acquainted with them, and they are overly watchful, jealous and even irritable when once a real or fancied cause for vigilance arises. Inheriting traditions and propensities which are inseparable from the climate and the race, they brook no interference with their peculiar views, and anything savoring of intolerance or bigotry concerning a cherished Southernism is summarily suppressed if it can be; apart from this, it matters little what the visitor believes or practices in a general way. In politics they incline largely one way, possibly for the reason that to do otherwise would, as they look upon it, threaten them with the domination of the black race, and this of all things they will not have, no matter by what means it is prevented. In religion they are protestant with heavy leaning towards the Baptist doctrines, not always free from narrowness, yett fairly tolerant—many evincing a willingness to listen, and demanding a right to believe or disbelieve, as their judgment may dictate.

Those who are unacquainted with the situation would be inclined to say at this point. What a grand field for missionary work! And so it is; but the great mistake of supposing that the South is deficient in the matter of Christian endeavor or ecclesiastical institutions, must not be made. Far from that! On the contrary, perhaps religious feeling is more generally diffused, guarded, and defended as herein expressed, than in any other section of the civilized world; but it is not of the kind from which riots and persecutions grow for no other reason than that it is opposed.

There is much else south of the imaginary dividing line of North and South that might be spoken of to interest, but which will not be referred to except incidentally in the

succeeding chapters. What we have said is for the purpose of giving only so much of a description of the country and people as is necessary to make our little narrative, the incidents of which are laid there, more easily understood. As this book deals principally with actual occurrences, and people in real life, such a foundation seems to be entirely proper.

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A NEW ARRIVAL IN THE TOWN.

A town pleasantly situated in the south-western part of Tennessee, the name of which for the present shall be Westminster, was at the time of which we write one of the most cosmopolitan places imaginable for its size—that is, for a southern town. It contained probably two thousand regular inhabitants, but these were constantly augmented, it being at times a rallying point for tourists from every clime, and the temporary abode of men who, in the aggregate, during a season, came well-nigh representing every shade of opinion, if not every phase of character.

A quiet little hotel, or perhaps it would be better to say a residence, with accommodations for a limited number of guests, was situated near the outskirts, and so pleasant in all respects were the location, surroundings and appointments, that its name, Harmony Place, did not seem at all inappropriate. In two important respects it was unlike any other hostelry in the town—there was no bar, and the guests all had an air of respectability in keeping with the house itself. It was kept by a planter, in ordinary financial circumstances, whose name was Marshall; he was assisted in his duties by a colored roustabout of uncertain ancestry, a circumscribed present, and a future wholly undefined. Mr. Marshall's wife, and daughter Claire, did their part by generously entertaining the visitors. There were at the time of which we write three guests—a lawyer named Brown, who had established himself at Westminster; a doctor calling himself Slocum, who was giving the town a trial

with a view to locating in it if the patronage warranted; and a tourist whose name was given as Reverend Fitzallen, and whose object seemed to be the pursuit of health, pleasure and information, and incidentally, the dissemination of the gospel according to his faith. Naturally, with so limited a circle of patrons, each having been there for some length of time, the associations all around were more like those in a family than such as exist between landlord and guests. An evening in the parlor with everybody but the Ethiopian present, the daughter singing to her own accompaniment on the piano, while the doctor turned the music for her, was often enjoyed, and there was rarely if ever a discordant circumstance to mar the serenity of these occasions.

It was early in September, 189—, the most enjoyable part of the year in Westminster. A man, who was readily distinguishable from the town-folk, not only by his strange face but by his attire, and by that indescribable air which appears the more plainly the more a stranger tries to discard or conceal it, made his way leisurely to the gate fronting Harmony Place, and continued his way up the walk leading to the door. He was met by Mrs. Marshall and informed, in response to his inquiry, that he could obtain lodgings there. The colored man took the guest's valise and led the way to a room on the second floor. After washing himself and brushing off the dust from his clothes, the stranger reappeared in the sitting room, and taking up a paper waited the announcement that refreshments were ready, which was not long in coming.

He was somewhat above medium height, well proportioned, not unusually well dressed, but still appeared presentable in good society, and had a countenance which, while not decidedly handsome, was regular and of that caste which attracts attention; his voice was quite pleasant, his natural conversational faculty proved to be good, and he was so

well fortified with current facts and all the pleasantries of the day, that before the meal was over he was quite in harmony with the hostess, who was not only happy to answer any question he asked, but took advantage of every opportunity to propound queries for herself. Within an hour from the time of arrival, the new guest seemed to be nearly as well acquainted as if he had been an inmate of the house for a month at least. This ability of rapidly forming acquaintance is very rare; and particularly in the case of travelers, no amount of money or graces can recompense its absence. Those who possess it do not need an extended reference to its usefulness to be made aware thereof, while those who are not in possession of it can never be made fully to understand its value by means of cold type and white paper.

The landlady has learned the name of the latest arrival before the reader has—it is Charles Durant, aged thirty, and he comes from the West—a rather indefinite abiding place to those of us who are residents of, or are familiar with, that division of our country. It is satisfactory, however, to a majority of our eastern and southern brethren who have never placed feet upon the shores of the Missouri, or crossed its waters, and who seem to entertain a vague idea that Westerners all come from one place, and are all alike in most respects.

Later in the day Durant took a stroll through the suburbs of the town, and returning was introduced to Mr. Marshall, to the guests, as they appeared one by one, with all of whom he was soon on the most cordial terms, and finally to the young lady, the sole representative on earth of her devoted parents, who, being twenty years of age, as pretty as a dream, well informed, and altogether attractive, was not likely to bear their name much longer, albeit at this time reveling in "maiden meditation, fancy free."

It was truly an interesting circle and the interest did not abate in the least by reason of the latest arrival.

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NEW ACQUAINTANCES AND AN AGREEABLE DISCUSSION.

The evening of the first day that marked the stranger's advent into Westminster saw the entire *personnel* of Harmony Place on the veranda; the new moon smiled benignly upon them, the evening was cool and the "ripe harvest of the new-mown hay" gave to the air a "sweet and wholesome odor." One subject after another was taken up, discussed and disposed of, or at least laid aside to give way to some other, and in each and all of them our hero (for such we may as well commence to recognize him) took a part, and exhibited a fund of information and an aptitude of presentation which gave him the preference without a contest whenever he chose to speak. This became more and more frequent as the night wore on, for there was no disguising the fact that he was, like the others, already one of the household. If any one of the party wondered what it was that he had come for, how he expected to get it, or how long he was to stay, the conjecture never found expression; for they all experienced so much of general satisfaction in hearing him, and took such genuine pleasure in his word-painting of western scenes and events, that they were all willing to have him stay indefinitely. He was literally chosen as one of their number without opposition, and the mere matters of detail regarding his purposes might be left to the future or be entirely undiscovered; he was now decidedly the architect of his own fortune so far as retaining the good will of that little group was concerned.

The conversation proceeded from point to point until the topics of the quiet gathering assumed more the aspect of an intellectual *melange* than anything else; the Sepoy rebellion made way for the Dakota blizzard, the signal failure of the first laying of the Atlantic cable was shelved to make place for Webster's artistic destruction of Dr. Parkman, and Cromwell's career of conquests and crimes was followed by a brief discussion of the science and practice of silver mining. (Variety and scope enough, surely!) It must be noticeable that the two subjects which agitate us nationally and sometimes locally more than any others—politics and religion—had so far escaped; they had not, however, been unthought of, and presently the latter was begun by the minister saying:

"Representing to some extent as I do, the church, I am compelled to admit that in the matters of organization, discipline and places of worship, America is thoroughly Christianized. Look at the profusion of church buildings wherever you go. To me such rivalry is gratifying in the extreme, representing as it does the highest type of good citizenship."

"I partially concur with you," said the lawyer, "and yet I belong to no church at all—do not, in fact, endorse Christianity as a department of civilized life."

"Why, how is this?" said Fitzallen, "I thought nearly everybody in this country must be orthodox to some extent at least."

"Not so with me, I assure you," the other replied, "and the strangest part of it is that my 'peculiar views,' as you may call them, are not the result of neglect or indifference, but are rather caused by investigation and the peculiar

explanations, or rather lack of explanations, of those who make the dissemination of religious views their calling."

"In other words you are an unbeliever."

"Exactly."

"Not totally, I trust."

"Oh, not necessarily. The creeds which base, or profess to base, their tenets upon the Bible do not, as it appears to me, live up to their professions, and the clergy—meaning no offense whatever—are more addicted to money-getting than to soul-getting. That there may be salvation and a Supreme Judge who provides it is to me simply like the traditional Scotch verdict—not proved."

The stranger from the west was listening to all this with the air of one deeply interested. It was as if an opportunity which he desired, but had not expressed himself concerning, had come, and he was not at all reluctant about replying when questioned as to his own views. It came when the churchman, after announcing his determination to "labor" with the infidel, turned to the newcomer and said:

"I do not know whether you would be for or against me in such a work, but coming from what we of the East are prone to regard as the land where restraints are not severe, I fear you might be disposed to assist him rather than me."

"Well, gentlemen," said Durant, "this topic interests me, and while I and my opinions are unknown to you all, still I will, if agreeable, endeavor to throw some light upon the subject at present, and will seek to do more in that direction hereafter if favored with an opportunity. I am a

believer in religion, laying claim to a testimony from above, and still I often find myself opposed by ministers; they are generally the very persons who are foremost in opposing me on every side, strange to say."

"I cannot imagine why this should be the case," said Fitzallen, "if you are as you state, a true believer in Christ and have a testimony of Him."

"It may seem strange to you, at which I do not wonder. But I am afraid I am delaying the work you have planned for Mr. Brown's welfare. If you will permit me to ask a few questions during your conversation with him, I may be able to take a general part in it before it closes, provided, however, that should we differ upon any religious views, it will be in a friendly and pleasant manner."

"Oh, certainly," said the churchman, "I am sure it will be a pleasure to me to have you join in our conversation as you see fit, and I do not doubt that Mr. Brown and the other gentlemen will look upon it in the same way."

The entire party here expressed approval of the proposed discussion, and the lawyer said:

"I have not the slightest objections, and will be glad to have all the light possible thrown upon the different doctrinal points that I do not believe, and mainly because of which I am not at present a member of any Christian church."

"Then, Mr. Brown," said Fitzallen, "let us commence our voyage in search of eternal truth. What particular part of the Christian faith appears to you as being most difficult to understand?"

"I confess there are many. However, let us commence with one of the principles of your belief. I will refer to some of

the literature of the Church of England. The first article of religion contained in the Church of England Prayer Book is: 'There is but one living and true God, everlasting; without body, parts or passions; of infinite power, wisdom and goodness; the maker and preserver of all things, both visible and invisible; and in the unity of this Godhead there are three persons of one substance, power and eternity—the Father, Son and the Holy Ghost.' According to this, then, your belief is that the Father, Son and Holy Ghost are one person, without body, parts or passions."

"You have certainly quoted correctly from the prayer book; I fail to see anything wrong with that. What fault have you to find with it?"

"None whatever if you really believe it, because there does not seem to me much variance in our conclusions if you believe in such a God as this; I can not conceive of a just God who has neither body, parts nor passions. So far as the Bible is concerned, I fail to see from what part of that book you obtain such a conclusion."

"Well, Mr. Brown, using your own language, 'so far as the Bible is concerned,' let us do as Isaiah commands, go 'to the law and to the testimony,' (Isaiah viii: 20) and I will soon convince you that the Bible plainly sets forth the fact that the Father and the Son are one. In fact, Jesus Himself declares that He and His Father are one. (John x: 30.) Is this not true?"

"Excuse me," said Durant, "but is it not more reasonable for us to believe He meant that He and His Father were united in all things as one person?—not that they were actually one and the same identity?"

"Certainly not," said the reverend, "our Savior meant just what He said when He declared that He and His Father were one."

"I must certainly differ from you," said the stranger, "for He also asked His Father to make His disciples one, even as He and the Father were one, as you will see by reference to John xvii: 20 and 21, and by your argument it must have been His wish for those disciples to lose their separate and distinct identities. I am afraid you are not making a very favorable impression on Mr. Brown's mind."

"Stranger," said Mr. Brown, "your view of the case, I must confess, appears to be very reasonable. Looking at it from any other standpoint would not be in accord with sound reason."

"Let me ask," said the preacher, "did not Jesus say, 'He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father?'" (John xiv: 9.)

"Yes," said the westerner, "for as Paul says, 'He was in the express image of His (Father's) person,' (Heb. i: 3), and this being the case Jesus might well give them to understand that when they had seen one they had seen the other. When Jesus went out to pray, He said, 'O, my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will but as Thou wilt.' (Matt, xxvi: 39.) Now then, to whom was our Savior praying? Was He asking a favor of Himself?"

"Oh, no; He was then praying to the Holy Spirit."

"Oh, then by such admission you have separated one of the three from Jesus, for in the beginning you declared that the three were one; and now that we have one of the three separated from the others, let us see if we can separate the other two. In order to do this, I refer you to the account of the martyrdom of Stephen. While being stoned to death he

looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and that Jesus was standing on the right hand of God. (Acts vii: 55.) Would it not be rather difficult for any person to stand on the right hand of himself? And in order to prove further that Jesus is a separate person from the Father, we will examine into the account of His baptism. On coming up out of the water, what was it that lighted upon Him in the form of a dove?" (Matt iii: 16.)

"We are told it was the Spirit of God."

"Exactly! And whose voice was it that spoke from the heavens, saying, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased?' (Matt. iii: 17.) Now, mind you, there was Jesus, who had just been raised from the water, being one person, the Holy Ghost which descended from above and rested upon Him in the form of a dove, making two personages; and does not the idea strike you very forcibly that the voice from heaven belonged to a third person? And then, again, I will draw your attention to—"

The churchman was getting warmed up. Said he: "These are things which we are not expected to understand; and, my young friend, I would advise you to drop such foolish ideas, for—"

"Excuse me. Did you say 'foolish ideas'? Why, my dear sir, we are told in the Bible that, 'This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.' (John xvii: 3.) Therefore, it should be our first duty to find out the character and being of God. You say we are not expected to understand these things, while the Bible says these are what we must understand if we desire eternal life. It also says we can understand the things of man by the spirit of man, but to understand the things of God we must have the Spirit of God; and as you