

CHAPTER XII.

BRIGHAM'S HAND-CART SCHEME, CONTINUED.—FAILURE OF THE "DIVINE PLAN."

Arrival of the First Train.—Fearful Sufferings of the Emigrants.—Women and Girls toiling at the Carts.—The Prophet's "Experiment."—Burying the Dead.—Greater Mortality among the Men.—Arrival of Assistance.—Hand-Cart Songs.—Scenes in the Camp of the Emigrants.—How every Prophecy of the Elders was Falsified.—Hoe the Tennant Family were Shamelessly Robbed.—One of the Vilest Swindles of the Prophet.—Mr. Tennant's Unhappy Death.—His Wife Views the "Splendid Property" Bought from Brigham.—Brigham Cheats her out of her Last Dollar.—She is Reduced to Absolute Poverty.—The Apostle Taylor Hastens to Zion.—Richards and Spencer are made Scapegoats.—Brigham evades all Responsibility.—Utter Failure of the "Divine Plan."

THE first Hand-Cart Companies, which had left Iowa City early in the season, arrived in the Salt Lake Valley the last of September. They were very much fatigued, and were greatly rejoiced when their journey was ended.



husbands in pulling the hand-

The entire company had waded every river on the route to Salt Lake, and, as a consequence, the health of almost every man and woman was completely broken. The married women suffered the least, as they only had to assist their

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carts. The young girls had to pull theirs unassisted, and they were literally worn out with the exertion. The children were placed on the carts when they became tired, and so added weight to already overburdened wagons. It was

when the second of these companies came in that Brigham Young was heard to say, as he rubbed his hands and smiled with the overflowing complacency, "This experiment is a success."

Alas for Brother Brigham, this remark was overheard by some of the emigrants, and it is needless to say that their faith in "inspiration," and "revelation," was very much weakened; and the subsequent adventures of their friends and companions, whose arrival had been delayed, by no means tended to reassure them, or restore their waning belief. It was enough to be the victims of a heartless and mercenary experiment; but to be deluded into the belief that it was by the direct revelation of the will of the Lord made it harder to bear, and there was much bitterness of spirit expressed when the people who had endured so much, and gloried in the endurance, because in so doing they were obeying the commands of God, learned that their sufferings were borne merely to help fill the purses of a false prophet and his corrupt followers.

When the relief train reached Captain Willie's company, they were camped on the Sweetwater, near the Rocky Ridges. They had eaten their last provisions, and death was staring them piteously in the face. The camp was filled with the dead and dying. There was no help for the latter, and the poor souls had lost their desire to live. They were waiting, with almost apathetic indifference, for release, while those dearest to them were doubly agonized because they must see the loved ones perish, and they were helpless even to bring comforts to them, or make life easier while it lasted. Those who were strong enough, dug one large grave in which all the dead were laid together. It was the best they could do; but their hands were no less tender

215 THE LAST, LONG SLEEP.

and loving, their hearts no less sore, than if the last rites had been as imposing as those of royalty itself. The only thing they could do to prepare their dear ones for the grave was to close the eyes, the loving eyes that, to be very last, had turned longingly Zion-ward; to fold the pulseless hands over the silent hearts that, through all hardships and toil, had kept their trust firm and their faith bright; to straighten out the tired feet that, bleeding and sore, had yet toiled joyfully along the rugged path that led to the fair Canaan of their dreams; to smooth the tangled hair away from haggard faces, where the lined of care lay heavily, and yet through which the light of peace divine shone serene and pure; to arrange as decently as possible the tattered garments, which were their only clothing for the tomb, and to lay them, coffinless, in their cold bed in the Rocky Mountains, in their last, long sleep; then to



go away and leave them there, with the relentless winter storms beating upon them, and no stone to mark their resting-place. The road from Winter-Quarters to Salt Lake was a *via dolorosa* indeed.

Thirteen had died in Willie's camp the day that succor reached them; two more died the next day; and all were buried in one grave. The men succumbed to death before the women. The cause, no doubt, was the greater weariness on account of their more arduous exertions, and their wonderful self-denial for the sake of their wives and children. They would work just so long as they could, then fall dead in front of their carts, their hands still holding them tight in the tenacious grasp of death. There was no time for mourning or delay. Wives left their husbands, husbands their wives, parents their children, and children their parents, under the frozen earth of the desert and mountain ridges.

When the poor Saints knew that assistance had really reached them, that starvation was beaten away and death held at bay, their joy knew no bounds. They cried like children, men as well as women, and burst forth into prayer and songs of praise. They attacked the food like famished animals, and ate it with a wolfish greed. The scene is one that can never be adequately described. It was full of a terrible pathos. It told of a suffering that never can be comprehended except by those who endured it. The clothing and bedding were then divided between them, and they were made comfortable, as they could be under the circumstances. That night, for the first time for many weeks, the sounds of rejoicing were heard through the camp. They were not forgotten of the Lord, nor deserted by his people; and again they found heart to sing their hand-cart hymns which had

been written for them by some enthusiastic members of the train.

217 THE HAND-CART SONGS.

Contrast one of their songs, if you please, with the situation when relief from Salt Lake reached them: —

“We're going to Zion with our carts,
And the Spirit of God within our hearts;
The old, decrepit, feeble dame
Will lend a hand to pull the same;
For some must push and some must pull,
As we go marching up the hill,
Until we reach the Valley, O!”

“Our maidens, they will dance and sing,
Our young men happier be than kings,
Our strength increasing every day,
As we go traveling up the way.
Yes, some must push and some must pull,
As we go marching up the hill,
Until we reach the Valley, O!”

Rough in phraseology, and rude in structure, it yet shows the spirit which animated the converts when they first started on their pilgrimage to the promised land. Another favorite song had a stirring chorus, as follows—

“Hurrah for the camp of Israel!
Hurrah for the Hand-Cart scheme!
Hurrah! Hurrah! 'tis better far
Than the wagon and ox-team.”

In this song the “divine plan” was extolled with all the enthusiastic fervor with which it was first expounded to them by the elders in England. It is needless to say that these songs were written in the first glow of the furor, before any of the hardships even of the sea-voyage had been encountered. They were not sung after the first encounter with a mountain storm; that took the heart out of them. Even in the rejoicing at their deliverance, they sang only the hymns, making no attempt even to revive the spirit of the hand-cart songs.

218 TERRIBLE SUFFERINGS.

After seeing Captain Willie's company made comfortable, the relief train started east again in search of Captain Martin's company. This they found in camp at Grease Wood Creek, twenty miles from Willie's camp. The suffering in this company was quite equal to that of the company just relieved, and precisely the same scenes were en-

acted. They were wild with joy, and men and women fell on the necks of their deliverers with sobs and kisses, calling them their saviors, and invoking blessings of all kinds on their heads.

The camp was filled with the dead and dying, and many had been left behind that day, having fallen exhausted in the way. The storm had been blinding, and their companions could not stop for them; they could only hasten on while daylight lasted, making their slow, painful progress towards the haven of their of their rest. My father and his comrades spent the night in searching for those that were left behind, and bringing them into camp, where they were tenderly cared for. Many of them died very soon after being brought in; others lived, but they were maimed for life, feet and hands, in many cases, having been literally frozen off. This was the people, "the chosen people of very elements themselves, should be controlled." Their belief in "prophecy" must have been severely tried by this shock.

Everything had happened to them to make their journey hard. Their carts had broken down repeatedly, as my father had prophesied they would, and a great deal of delay had been caused by the frequent stopping for repairs; their cattle had stampeded, so that their supply of milk and fresh beef was cut off, and only oxen enough left to allow one yoke to a team; some of the men who dropped behind the others, wearied with the journey, were eaten by wolves; very many had died, and others were hopelessly crippled; the winter had set in earlier, and with severer storms than

219 EATEN BY THE WOLVES.

have ever been known in all the Utah experience. It seemed as if the Lord were punishing priest and people, the one for the audacious assumption of power, the other for blind belief in, and dependence on, earthly promises, even when purporting to come from Him. Blasphemous presumption and foolish ignorance were alike hateful in His sight.

Richards had promised the people that they should find supplies at Laramie, but he was unable to reach there with them, and on their arrival the Saints found only a message telling them that the supplies would be at South Pass. It was with heavy hearts that they went on their toilsome way, more discouraged than ever they had been before. The swift-falling winter storms made matters worse, and it is only a wonder that so many survived as did,—that every one did not perish before aid could reach them.

The day after reaching Martin's camp, the party from Salt Lake pushed on about thirty miles farther east, walking most of the way, through a blinding snow, to meet Captain Hunt's wagon train. They found the people connected with this but very little better off than the Hand-Cart companies; they were suffering severely from the intense cold, and many had their limbs frozen. Captain Hunt might

have hastened and reached Salt Lake City earlier, but he had been expressly forbidden to pass the hand-carts, which shows conclusively enough that those very persons who sent the emigrants off at that unfavorable season feared for the results. This was the last company that was to be relieved, and so my father and his companions remained with the train until it overtook the hand-carts at Devil's Gate.

At this point the train was unloaded, and all the goods which were going to Salt Lake City, that could actually be spared, were left there for the winter, and the wagons were filled with the sick and feeble emigrants, who could never have reached the Valley but for this aid. The progress was necessarily slow, but the people were so much more

220 ANOTHER PROPHETIC BLUNDER.

comfortable that the time did not drag so heavily. There were very few deaths after the mountains were well crossed, and a milder climate reached, and those who were ill grew better, although the majority of them have never been well since.

At Fort Bridger, one hundred and thirty miles from Salt Lake City, the emigrants were met by and order from Brigham Young to winter there and at Fort Supply. A general feeling of dismay spread over the camp, in spite of the joy with which the Saints received the added supplies of food and clothing. To be so near their destination, and yet to be kept from it, seemed doubly hard, after all the sorrow and hardships they had met and endured on their way. It did indeed seem as though the way to the land of promise was closed, instead of being opened to them. Were they, like Moses of old, to die in sight of their Canaan? Had they been brought all this way only to perish just outside the walls of their Zion?

The places designated by Brigham were totally unfit to winter in. Should the poor Saints, in their feeble and emaciated condition, attempt it, it was more than likely that they would perish before spring. Seeing the utter impracticability of the plan, and touched by the distress of the poor people, who were again to be made the victims of a prophetic blunder, two or three of the relieving party, among them my father, came at once to the city, traveling day and night, to have arrangements made to bring them to the Valley.

They were successful in their mission, and an express was at once dispatched to bring the waiting Saints home. When at length they arrived, they were met with gladness, and given the warmest welcome. The people in Salt Lake City opened their houses to them, and took them gladly in, giving them the best and the kindest care. Those of the Hand-Cart companies, who had come in first, crowded round them, and met them with tears of rejoicing, in which

221 MEETING OF THE HAND-CART COMPANIES.

Sorrow mingled. It was then that they began to realize their loss. As one after another of their old companions came up, and missing some familiar face, inquired for the friend so dearly beloved, always the same sad answer came—“Died on the Plains.” Sixty-seven were left on the way from the Missouri River to the Valley, which was about one sixth of the number which started.

I remember distinctly when these companies came in; their wretched condition impresses me at the time, and I have seen many of them since, poor crippled creatures, stumping about the city, trying to do enough work to keep soul and body together; more than that, they were not able to do. I have heard, too, from some of them, the most harrowing stories of their journey, that terrible, fatal journey, which was one of the very worst blunders that the Price of Blunderers, Brigham Young, ever made.

The recollection is made more vivid because my youngest brother, Edward, who went out with a team to assist the emigrants got lost in the snow, and for a week we supposed him to be dead. After wandering for some days in the mountains, with both feet badly frozen, he was found by a mountaineer named Battiste, who kept him

222 THE PROPHET'S DISINTERESTED GENEROSITY.

And cared for him most kindly, until the arrival of my father, who had heard, while with the train, that he was missing, and had gone at once in search of him. It was a narrow escape, and the terrible expedition came near proving a tragedy to us as well as to so many others.



Among the emigrants was a very wealthy gentle-

man of the name Tennant. He and his wife were among the early converts, and were very earnest Mormons. They had for a long time been resolved to come to Zion, and when the Hand-Cart scheme was introduced they decided to join that company. Humble followers of Christ, they thought they could in no better way show their love for Him and their devotion to their religion, than by such an act of self-sacrifice as this. Possessed of ample means to have crossed the ocean and traveled in the most comfortable and even luxurious manner, they nevertheless chose to go in in this way, with the poorest Saints, and share with them all the hardships and dangers which should attend this toilsome, perilous journey.

Mr. Tennant gave liberally to the emigration fund, in order that as many poor Saints as possible might make the long-anticipated pilgrimage to Zion, and both himself and his wife provided liberally for the comfort of their poor fellow-travelers. A short time before the emigrant company left England, the Apostle Richards, in one of his eloquent dissertations on the “plan” and its divine origin, said that in order to assist the poor to emigrate, President Young had given the Emigration Fund Society an estate in Salt Lake City, to be sold for its benefit. He dilated largely upon **[enlarged upon]** the disinterested generosity of the Prophet, and his desire that as many as possible of his faithful followers should be gathered to Zion during that season. Fired by this act of extreme kindness on the part of his revered leader in the church, Mr. Tennant at once bought the property, and paid, it is said, thirty thousand dollars down for it. There is little need, perhaps, of saying that that was immensely more

223 SAD DEATH OF MR. TENNANT.

than its real value; but that its purchaser was not aware of, as it was glorified by all the apostolic eloquence bestowed upon it, quite beyond recognition.

On the voyage, and during the journey across the States, and the tiresome waiting time at Iowa City, no one was more beloved than Mr. Tennant and his gentle estimable wife. Sharing alike with the poorer Saints, no word of complaint ever passed their lips. They never for a moment seemed to regret their decision to emigrate at this particular time, but accepted every fresh hardship as a trial to their faith, sent by God Himself to test them, and prove their worthiness to enter His glorious kingdom on earth. They moved among their companions with kindly faces and words of cheer and comfort. They encouraged endurance by their example, and made the forced discomforts of some of the party seem easier to bear by their voluntary assumption of them. As far as they could they alleviated the distress which prevailed, and were always ready to perform any deeds of kindness.

The journey with the hand-carts was doubly hard for them, unused as they were to exertion; and day after day the wife saw the husband slowly succumbing to fatigue and disease, and she powerless to assist him. But, though his strength waned and his health failed him, yet his courage and his faith remained steadfast and fixed. Whatever came he believed would surely be right, and though he struggled manfully to keep up until he should reach Zion, yet he was overcome, and died at O'Fallon's Bluffs, literally of exhaustion. His last thought was for his sorrowing wife, and his last word was of comfort and consolation to her. He had provided a home for her in Zion; Brother Brigham held it in trust for her, and she would find the comforts to which she was used, and rest and peace in the Valley with the chosen people.

The bereaved wife clung wildly to her husband's remains,

224 A VILE SWINDLE BY BRIGHAM YOUNG.

with the most heart-broken lamentations. To have him die was a misery in itself; but to see the slow, cruel torture which he underwent, and to watch him slowly dying such a horrible death, was almost unbearable. For a time it seemed almost as though she must be left there with him; that her soul would follow his. Happier would it have been for her had that fate been hers. The cold earth and pitiless winter storms would not be so cold and so pitiless as the world was to her, after this loving protecting arm was taken from her. A woman, unused to toil and hardship, nurtured in luxury, reared in tenderness and love, she was left alone to battle single-handed the world. And such a world! Whose ruling passion was avarice, and whose delight was another's torture; the world of Mormon Sainthood—ruled over by a grasping, lecherous, heartless tyrant, who laughed at a woman's sorrows and flouted at her wrongs. I think if she had known all that was to follow, she would have lain down on the plain by the side of her dead husband, and endured the torture of a horrible, slow death, rather than have gone on to the years of suffering which lay before her.

It is fortunate, indeed, that the future is so closely veiled to us; else we should all lose heart and courage in this unequal struggle called life, and lay down our weapons, convinced that it is of no use to struggle longer. Providence deals wisely with us, after all, and we are forced to admit it at every step of our lives.

The hurried funeral rites were over, and the man who had been so great a benefactor to the people among whom he had cast his lot, was left sleeping his last sleep in a strange land, and the sorrowing party resumed their weary way, saddened by this affliction. On the arrival at Salt Lake Mrs. Tennant at once proceeded to look after her property. The "magnificent estate" for which her husband had paid

so fabulous a price, was a small wooden house, inconvenient

225 DISGRACED FOR LIFE.

and out of repair, and worth not a tenth part of what had been paid for it.

She was shocked and troubled at what seemed such a piece of swindling on the part of the President and the church authorities, although at first she was inclined to exonerate Brigham Young and blame Apostle Richards for misrepresentation; but an audience with Brigham soon convinced her that he was at the bottom of the whole affair, and she felt bitterly enough towards the man who, under such a piece of trickery. Even this poor shelter was not left her very long. The place, and, indeed, most of the valuable things which her husband had sent to make their home in Zion more comfortable, were taken for tithing and on other pretenses, and in a very few months this woman was compelled to go out to daily labor to earn her bread, her rightful property going to fill the already overflowing coffers of the "Prophet of the Lord." Indeed, the entire Hand-Cart expedition was a good speculation for the President, and helped replenish the prophetic pocket.

There is no doubt Young did repent of this foolish step of his, but it was not at all on account of the suffering and misery which he entailed upon so many innocent persons, but because he knew that an act of that kind, becoming public, would make him and his religion more unpopular than ever, and they were already in sufficiently bad order with the outside world. He could ill afford to make such a blunder. It would also work against his influence with the Saints themselves, and he was always jealous of his authority over his people.

The Apostle John Taylor arrived home before either Apostle Richards or Elder Spenser, and he, as a matter of course, told his own story, throwing all the blame upon his two co-workers, so that when they arrived they found the full torrent of the Presidential wrath turned against them. They were sadly hurt, for, in their zeal to carry out instructions

226 RICHARDS RESTORED TO FAVOR.

and gain the approbation of their leader, they had, they affirmed, all through the affair, acted against the dictates of humanity and their own consciences.

He was loud in his denunciations of them; he cursed them "in the name of Israel's God;" he ridiculed them in public until they were compelled to hide their heads in very shame. Their sole fault was, they had been too faithful to him. Spenser never recovered from the disgrace; he always remained a broken-down, helpless man, seeking no

favor, expecting none, not even decent treatment, from his master, until, after lingering for ten years under the prophetic ban, he died heart-broken. Richards has, in a degree, overcome the President's feeling towards him, and is gaining favor all the time, but he will never stand as high as he did before this most unfortunate exhibition. The people will never forget his share in it, and those who came to Zion, influenced by his eloquent appeals and encouraged by his prophecies, associate him naturally enough with that unhappy experience. Then, although Brigham Young has partially restored him to favor by certain acts of and kindnesses granted to him, yet he has never taken back any of the anathemas which he showered upon him, and they are by no means forgotten by those who heard them, and have a certain influence even now in forming public opinion.

Notwithstanding the terrible consequences of this "divine plan," its originator did not wish to acknowledge that he had in any way been mistaken. The plan, he argued, was all right; it only went wrong through mismanagement, and he would prove its feasibility to the satisfaction of every Saint in the Territory. The plan was "divine," and he would "sanctify it to the glory of the Lord."

So in the April following he sent a company of elders on a mission, compelling them to go with hand-carts. These were properly made, of good material, strongly finished, with iron tires, and everything to make them durable. They had plenty of provisions; so they would not be reduced to

227 A MISERABLE FAILURE.

the necessity of eating their own shoes nor biting their own flesh in the mad frenzy of starvation, as many a poor fellow did in the expedition whose "divinity" they were sent out to prove. The season was favorable, and there was no danger of their being overtaken by terrible mountain storms, underneath which they would be buried. They were all robust young men, too; better fitted to endure a journey like the one ordained for them by their Prophet, than the feeble old men and women, the young wives, mothers, and maidens, and the tiny, toddling children, who formed a great portion of the other company. Then they started fresh, not wearied already by a rough sea-voyage, a journey thousands of miles across the Continent, to the final starting-point, nor reduced by hunger and exposure. They had the advantage in everything, and yet, although their expedition was by no means fatal, it was very far from being a "success," such as Brigham expected it to be.

On his way to Chicago my father overtook them at Devil's Gate. He found them completely jaded and worn out. In truth, they were almost dead from weariness. They traveled slowly, making long stops to rest, and finally they

reached the Missouri River in a perfect state of exhaustion. They left their carts there with the utmost willingness, showing wonderful alacrity at abandoning a "divine" scheme. To this day they all aver they cannot bear to hear the word "Hand-cart" mentioned. It was the last time the "experiment" was tried, and after this but little was said regarding the divine origin of the plan; and it is a significant fact that no one has preserved more utter silence of the subject than the "Revelator," Brigham Young.