LIFE
IN
THE FAR WEST.

BY

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1859.
These two once more betook themselves to trapping, the Yellowstone being their chief hunting-ground. But we must again leap over months and years, rather than conduct the reader through all their perilous wanderings, and at last bring him back to the camp on Bijou, where we first introduced him to our mountaineers; and as we have already followed them on the Arapaho trail, which they pursued to recover their stolen animals from a band of that nation, we will once again seat ourselves at the camp on Boiling Spring, where they had met a strange hunter on a solitary expedition to the Bayou Salade, whose double-barreled rifle had excited their wonder and curiosity.

From him they learned also that a large band of Mormons were wintering on the Arkansas, en route to the Great Salt Lake and Upper California; and as our hunters had before fallen in with the advanced guard of these fanatic emigrants, and felt no little wonder that such helpless people should undertake so long a journey through the wilderness, the stranger narrated to them the history of the sect, which we shall shortly transcribe for the benefit of the reader.
CHAPTER IX.

The Mormons were originally of the sect known as "Latter-day Saints," which sect flourishes wherever Anglo-Saxon gulls are found in sufficient numbers to swallow the egregious nonsense of fanatic humbugs who fatten upon their credulity. In the United States they especially abounded; but, the creed becoming "slow," one Joe Smith, a smart man, arose from its ranks, and instilled a little life into the decaying sect.

Joe, better known as the "Prophet Joe," was taking his siesta one fine day, upon a hill in one of the New England States, when an angel suddenly appeared to him, and made known the locality of a new Bible or Testament, which contained the history of the lost tribes of Israel; that these tribes were no other than the Indian nations which possessed the continent of America at the time of its discovery, and the remains of which still existed in their savage state; that, through the agency of Joe, these were to be reclaimed, collected into the bosom of a church to be there estabished, according to principles which would be found in the wonderful book—and which church was gradually to receive into its bosom all other churches, sects, and persuasions, with "unanimity of belief and perfect brotherhood."

After a certain probation, Joe was led in body and spirit to the mountain; by the angel who first appeared to him, was pointed out the position of the wonderful book, which was covered by a flat stone, on which would be found two round pebbles, called Urim and Thummim, and through the agency of which the mystic characters inscribed on the pages of the book were to be
deciphered and translated. Joe found the spot indicated without any difficulty, cleared away the earth, and discovered a hollow place formed by four flat stones; on removing the topmost one of which sundry plates of brass presented themselves, covered with quaint and antique carving; on the top lay Urim and Thummim (commonly known to the Mormons as Mummum and Thumraum, the pebbles of wonderful virtue), through which the miracle of reading the plates of brass was to be performed.

Joe Smith, on whom the mantle of Moses had so suddenly fallen, carefully removed the plates and hid them, burying himself in woods and mountains while engaged in the work of translation. However, he made no secret of the important task imposed upon him, nor of the great work to which he had been called. Numbers at once believed him, but not a few were deaf to belief, and openly derided him. Being persecuted (as the sect declares, at the instigation of the authorities), and many attempts being made to steal his precious treasure, Joe, one fine night, packed his plates in a sack of beans, bundled them into a Jersey wagon, and made tracks for the West. Here he completed the great work of translation, and not long after gave to the world the "Book of Mormon," a work as bulky as the Bible, and called "of Mormon," for so was the prophet named by whose hand the history of the lost tribes had been handed down in the plates of brass thus miraculously preserved for thousands of years, and brought to light through the agency of Joseph Smith.

The fame of the book of Mormon spread over all America, and even to Great Britain and Ireland. Hundreds of proselytes flocked to Joe, to hear from his lips the doctrine of Mormonism; and in a very brief period, the Mormons became a numerous and recognized sect, and Joe was at once, and by universal acclamation, installed as the head of the Mormon church, and was ever after known by the name of the "Prophet Joseph."

However, from certain peculiarities in their social system "ho
Mormons became rather unpopular in the settled States, and at length moved bodily into Missouri, where they purchased several tracts of land in the neighborhood of Independence. Here they erected a large building, which they called the Lord's Store, where goods were collected on the common account, and retailed to members of the church at moderate prices. All this time their numbers increased in a wonderful manner, and immigrants from all parts of the States, as well as Europe, continually joined them. As they became stronger, they grew bolder and more arrogant in their projects. They had hitherto been considered as bad neighbors, on account of their pilfering propensities, and their utter disregard of the conventional decencies of society—exhibiting the greatest immorality, and endeavoring to establish among their society an indiscriminate concubinage. This was sufficient to produce an ill feeling against them on the part of their neighbors, the honest Missourians; but they still tolerated their presence among them, until the Saints openly proclaimed their intention of seizing upon the country, and expelling by force the present occupants; giving, as their reason, that it had been revealed to their prophets that the "Land of Zion" was to be possessed by themselves alone.

The sturdy Missourians began to think this was a little too strong, and that, if they permitted such aggressions any longer, they would be in a fair way of being despoiled of their lands by the Mormon interlopers. At length matters came to a crisis, and the Saints, emboldened by the impunity with which they had hitherto carried out their plans, issued a proclamation to the effect that all in that part of the country, who did not belong to the Mormon persuasion, must "clear out," and give up possession of their lands and houses. The Missourians collected in a body, burned the printing-press from which the proclamation had emanated, seized several of the Mormon leaders, and, after inflicting a summary chastisement, "tarred and feathered" them, and let them go.
To revenge this insult, the Mormons marshaled an army of "Saints, and marched upon Independence, threatening vengeance against the town and people. Here they met, however, a band of sturdy backwoodsmen, armed with rifles, determined to defend the town against the fanatic mob, who, not relishing their appearance, refused the encounter, and surrendered their leaders at the first demand. The prisoners were afterward released, on condition that the Mormons left that part of the country without delay.

Accordingly, they once more "took up their beds and walked," crossing the Missouri to Clay County, where they established themselves, and would finally have formed a thriving settlement but for their own acts of willful dishonesty. At this time their blasphemous mummerly knew no bounds. Joe Smith, and other prophets who had lately arisen, were declared to be chosen of God; and it was the general creed that, on the day of judgment, the former would take his stand on the right hand of the judgment-seat, and that none would pass into the kingdom of heaven without his seal and touch. One of their tenets was the faith in "spiritual matrimony." No woman, it appeared, would be admitted into heaven unless "passed" by a saint. To qualify them for this, it was necessary that the woman should first be received by the guaranteeing Mormon as an "earthly wife," in order that he did not pass in any of whom he had no knowledge. The consequence of this state of things may be imagined. The most degrading immorality was a precept of the order, and an almost universal concubinage existed among the sect, which at this time numbered at least forty thousand. Their disregard to the laws of decency and morality was such as could not be tolerated in any class of civilized society.

Again did the honest Missourians set their faces against this pernicious example, and when the county to which the Mormons had removed became more thickly settled, they rose to a man against the modern Gomorrah. The Mormons, by this time,
having on their part gained considerable accession to their strength, thought to set the laws at defiance, organized and armed large bodies of men, in order to maintain the ascendancy over the legitimate settlers, and bid fair to constitute an “imperium in imperio” in the State, and become the sole possessors of the public lands. This, of course, could not be tolerated. Governor Boggs at once ordered out a large force of State militia to put down this formidable demonstration, marched against the Mormons, and suppressed the insurrectionary movement without bloodshed.

From Clay County they moved still farther into the wilds, and settled at last in Caldwell County, where they built the town of “Far West,” and here they remained for the space of three years.

During this time they were continually receiving converts to the faith, and many of the more ignorant country people were disposed to join them, being only deterred by the fear of incurring ridicule from the stronger-minded. The body of the Mormons seeing this, called upon their prophet, Joe Smith, to perform a miracle in public before all comers, which was to prove to those of their own people who still doubted the doctrine, the truth of what it advanced (the power of performing miracles was steadfastly declared to be in their hands by the prophets), and to enlist those who wavered in the Mormon cause.

The prophet instantly agreed, and declared that, upon a certain day, he would walk across the broad waters of the Missouri without wetting the soles of his feet. On the appointed day, the river banks were thronged by an expectant crowd. The Mormons sang hymns of praise in honor of their prophet, and were proud of the forthcoming miracle, which was to set finally at rest all doubt as to his power and sanctity.

This power of performing miracles and effecting miraculous cures of the sick, was so generally believed by the Mormons,
that physic was never used among them. The prophets visited the beds of the sick, and laid hands upon them, and if, as of course was almost invariably the case, the patient died, it was attributed to his or her want of faith; but if, on the contrary, the patient recovered, there was universal glorification on the miraculous cure.

Joe Smith, was a tall, fine-looking man, of most plausible address, and possessed the gift of the gab in great perfection. At the time appointed for the performance of the walking-water miracle, he duly attended on the river banks, and descended barefoot to the edge of the water.

"My brethren!" he exclaimed in a loud voice, "this day is a happy one to me, to us all, who venerate the great and only faith. The truth of our great and blessed doctrine will now be proved before the thousands I see around me. You have asked me to prove by a miracle that the power of the prophets of old has been given to me. I say unto you, not only to me, but to all who have faith. I have faith, and can perform miracles—that faith empowers me to walk across the broad surface of that mighty river without wetting the soles of my unworthy feet; but if ye are to see this miracle performed, it is necessary that ye have faith also, not only in yourselves, but in me. Have ye this faith in yourselves?"

"We have, we have!" roared the crowd.

"Have ye the faith in me, that ye believe I can perform this miracle?"

"We have, we have!" roared the crowd.

"Then," said Joe Smith, coolly walking away, "with such faith do ye know well that I could, but it boots not that I should do it; therefore, my brethren, doubt no more;" and Joe put on his boots and disappeared.

Being again compelled to emigrate, the Mormons proceeded into the state of Illinois, where, in a beautiful situation, they
founded the New Jerusalem, which, it had been declared by the
prophet Mormon, should rise out of the wilderness of the west,
and where the chosen people should be collected under one church,
and governed by the elders after a "spiritual fashion."

The city of Nauvoo soon became a large and imposing settle-
ment. An enormous building, called the Temple of Zion, was
erected, half church half hotel, in which Joe Smith and the other
prophets resided, and large storehouses were connected with it, in
which the goods and chattels belonging to the community were
kept for the common good.

However, here, as everywhere else, they were continually
quarreling with their neighbors; and as their numbers increased,
so did their audacity. A regular Mormon militia was again or-
ganized and armed, under the command of experienced officers,
who had joined the sect; and now the authority of the State
government was openly defied. In consequence, the executive
took measures to put down the nuisance, and a regular war
commenced, and was carried on for some time, with no little
bloodshed on both sides; and this armed movement is known in
the United States as the Mormon war. The Mormons, how-
ever, who, it seemed, were much better skilled in the use of the
tongue than the rifle, succumbed; the city of Nauvoo was taken;
Joe Smith and other ringleading prophets captured, and the
former, in an attempt to escape from his place of confinement,
was seized and shot. The Mormons declare he had long foretold
his own fate, and that when the rifles of the firing party who
were his executioners were leveled at the prophet's breast, a flash
of lightning struck the weapons from their hands, and blinded for
a time the eyes of the sacrilegious soldiers.

With the death of Joe Smith the prestige of the Mormon cause
decayed; but still thousands of proselytes joined them annually,
and at last the State took measures to remove them altogether, as
a body, from the country.