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Chapter X

Author(s): George Q. Cannon

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Abstract: Travel in Easterly Direction—Land Bountiful—"Irreantum," or Many Waters—Eight Years in Wilderness—Children Born—Diet of Raw Meat—Women Healthy and Strong as Men—Learn to Bear Journeyings Without Murmuring—"Araby the Blest"—Travelers' description of Land—Company Rest for Many Days

CHAPTER X.

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CONTENTED once more to be led, the company resumed their journey in an easterly direction, until they came to a land which they called Bountiful, because of the abundance of its fruit and wild honey. This was on the sea shore. They camped upon the shore and called the sea “Irreantum,” the meaning of which is many waters. The travels in the wilderness covered a space of eight years. During this period they had children born to them, and although they lived upon raw meat, their wives had plenty of milk with which to nurse their children, and they were healthy and strong as the men, and what is worthy of note, “they began to bear their journeyings without murmurings.” This was a great point gained. We do not have a full account of their trials and difficulties while traveling for these eight years in that desert land; but Nephi says they traveled and waded through much affliction; indeed they suffered so many afflictions and so much difficulty, they could not write them all. No doubt their new life called forth their ingenuity and greatly tried their patience. It had made them hardy and enduring, capable of bearing fatigue and of contending with difficulty and hardship. The details of their perplexities, and the shifts to which they were put, the Latter-day Saints who made the journey from Nauvoo in the state of Illinois to the Great Salt Lake Valley during the early years of the settlement, can readily supply. Nephi takes the opportunity, while speaking of their journey and the wonderful manner in which they had been sustained, especially the women in the bearing and nursing of their children, to call attention to the fact that

the commandments of God must be fulfilled; and if they are kept by the children of men, He doth nourish and strengthen them, and provides means whereby they can accomplish the thing which He has commanded them. This great truth Nephi never lost sight of, and it furnishes us, as we have said before, the key to his success in accomplishing the extraordinary works assigned to him.

The direction in which they traveled after the death of Ishmael is that which would lead a company to-day into the most fertile region in Arabia. One traveler in speaking of a region, if not that called by Lehi and his company Bountiful, certainly adjoining it, says:

“As we crossed these [open fields] with lofty almond, citron and orange trees, yielding a delicious fragrance on either hand, exclamations of astonishment and admiration burst from us. Is this Arabia? we said: this the country we had looked on heretofore as a desert? Verdant fields of grain and sugar cane, stretching along for miles, are before us; streams of water flowing in all directions, intersect our path; and the happy and contented appearance of the peasants, agreeable helps to fill up the smiling picture. The atmosphere was delightfully clear and pure; and as we trotted joyously along, giving or returning the salutation of peace or welcome, I could almost fancy I had reached that ‘Araby the blest,’ which I had been accustomed to regard as existing only in the fictions of our poets.” *Trav. in Arabia*, Vol. I. pp. 115, 116.

Captain Haines, whose manuscript journal is quoted from in Forster’s *Arabia*, p. 452, says of this part of Arabia:

“The whole province of Hydramant is represented as abundant in fertilization and richly covered hills; the palm groves, magnificent; plentiful supplies of water, and, indeed, every beauty and perfection necessary to make a paradise of this earth.”

Palgrave, (*Jour. of Geo. Soc.* Vol. 34, 1864, p. 147) in speaking of the province of Batinah, in the district of Oman, says:

“Those lands lying between the sea and Jebel-Akhdar, are especially rich in produce, except were the rocky coast-line interferes.”

He describes the trees of that region as the cocoanut, the date palms, the manga tree, and other fruit-bearing trees, and says, "it is indeed the garden of the Peninsula." Speaking of a district adjoining this, he describes fertile valleys, full of rich vegetation and considerable produce; vines, whose wine is said to be good, abound in the slopes. "Bees abound in the mountain, and furnish excellent honey of a whitish color" (p. 148).

The lapse of twenty-four centuries makes wonderful changes in the earth's surface, but here is a land which is to-day exactly answering the description which Nephi gave of it—a land to which, because of its much fruit and also wild honey, they gave the appropriate name of Bountiul. Not even the honey in the mountains is wanting to distinguish it to-day. This traveler, in speaking of the mountains of that region, says: "The mountains themselves are sometimes bare—more often wooded—at least partially so." No doubt the mountains were wooded at the time Lehi and company reached there; for Nephi, as we shall see as we proceed with our history, needed timber convenient to the sea. In general outline the Arabian sea-shore offers little variety, being mostly mountainous; but there are exceptions to this as we have seen. Some parts of this shore present regions of remarkable fertility. It doubtless did the same at the time of which we write. It was to one of these rich spots that Lehi and his company were led, and charming and attractive it must have appeared to them after their long and weary march, suffering from hunger and thirst, in the desert. With what peculiar feelings they must have gazed on the great ocean whose waves beat upon the shore where they were encamped! It is not difficult to understand that they "were exceedingly rejoiced" when they reached such a place, and that having reached there some of them felt as though they did not wish to go any farther.

Some of the Latter-day Saints who left Nauvoo, and traveled, having but little rest, until they reached the valley where Salt Lake City now stands, felt as though they had had traveling enough to last for years. They were so fatigued with their journey and the hardships incident thereto that they felt delighted to reach a place where there was a prospect of having

a relief from that kind of life. But how much more would this be the case with this company after their long and toilsome journey! They had reached an earthly paradise. No occasion now to hunt for game to supply food necessary for their wants. No suffering from hunger or thirst now. Here, upon all hands, was everything in profusion necessary to sustain life—fruit of the most delicious kind. Dates form the staple of Arab food to-day, and probably they had the Kholas date—for date palms abound in all that region—the fruit of which is amber-colored, and of exquisite flavor. This fruit called the king of dates, grows in a district near the sea, and is noted all over Arabia for its superiority over every other variety. An abundance of honey. Drinking water, sweet and plentiful. And fish, too; for that ocean is full of fish of almost every kind. If their past habits of eating meat should have caused them to tire of the fruit, game likely abounded in a fertile region like that and was easily procured. Here Nephi rested with the others “for the space of many days” before he was called upon to perform new labors—labors that were essential to the establishment of the purpose the Lord had in view for them.