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A GREAT STORM.

Fierce War of the Elements in the Salt Lake Basin—The Wasatch Mountains Capped with Snow—A Magnificent Sight.

[FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.]

SALT LAKE CITY, May 19, 1877.

Utah has just been blessed with one of the grandest storms I have ever beheld this side of the Sierra. The mountains are laden with fresh snow; wild streams are swelling and booming adown the cañons, and out in the valley of the Jordan a thousand rain-pools are gleaming in the sun.

With reference to the development of fertile storms bearing snow and rain, the greater portion of the calendar springtime of Utah has been winter. In all the upper cañons of the mountains the snow is now from five to ten feet deep or more, and most of it has fallen since March. Almost every other day during the last three weeks small local storms have been falling on the Wasatch and Oquirrh mountains, while the Jordan valley remained dry and sun-filled. But on the afternoon of Thursday, the 17th ultimo, wind, rain and snow filled the whole basin, driving wildly over valley and plain from range to range, bestowing their benefactions in most cordial and harmonious storm-measures. The oldest saints say they have never witnessed a more violent storm of this kind since the first settlement of Zion, and while the gale from the northwest, with which the storm began, was rocking their adobe walls, uprooting trees and darkening the streets with billows of dust and sand, some of them seemed inclined to guess that the terrible phenomenon was one of the signs of the times of which their preachers are so constantly reminding them, the beginning of the outpouring of the treasured wrath of the Lord upon the Gentiles for the killing of Joseph Smith. To me it seemed a cordial outpouring of Nature's love; but it is easy to differ with salt Latter-days in everything—storms, wives, politics and religion.

About an hour before the storm reached the city I was so fortunate as to be out with a friend on the banks of the Jordan enjoying the scenery. Clouds, with peculiarly restless and self-conscious gestures, were marshaling themselves along the mountain tops, and sending out long, overlapping wings across the valley, and even where no cloud was visible, an obscuring film absorbed the sunlight, giving rise to a cold, blueish darkness. Nevertheless, distant objects along the boundaries of the landscape were revealed with wonderful distinctness in this wierd, subdued, cloud-sifted light. The mountains, in particular, with the forests on their flanks, their mazy lace-like canvas, the wombs of the ancient glaciers, and their marvelous profusion of ornate sculpture, were most impressively manifest. One would fancy that a man might be clearly seen walking on the snow at a distance of twenty or thirty miles.

While we were reveling in this rare, ungarish grandeur, twining from range to range, studying the darkening sky and listening to the still small voices of the flowers at our feet, some of the denser clouds came down, crowning and wreathing the highest peaks and dropping long, gray fringes whose smooth linear structure showed that snow was beginning to fall. Of these partial storms there were soon ten or twelve, arranged in two rows, while the main Jordan valley between them lay as yet in profound calm. At 4:30 P. M. a dark brownish cloud appeared close down on the plain towards the lake, extending from the northern extremity of the Oquirrh range in a northeasterly direction as far as the eye could reach. Its peculiar color and structure excited our attention without enabling us to decide certainly as to its character, but we were not left long in doubt, for in a few minutes it came sweeping over the valley in wild uproar, a torrent of wind thick with sand and dust, advancing with a most majestic front, rolling and overcoming like a gigantic sea wave. Scarcely was it in plain sight ere it was upon us, racing across the Jordan, over the city, and up the slopes of the Wasatch, eclipsing all the landscapes in its course—the bending trees, the dust streamers, and the wild onrush of everything movable, giving it an appreciable visibility that rendered it grand and inspiring.

This gale-portion of the storm lasted over an hour, then down came the blessed rain and the snow all through the night and next day, the snow and rain alternating and blending in the valley. It is long since I have seen snow coming into a city. The crystal flakes falling in the foul streets was a pitiful sight.

Notwithstanding the vaunted refining influences of towns—purity of all kinds—pure hearts, pure streams, pure snow must here be exposed to terrible trials. City Creek, coming from its high glacial fountains, enters the streets of this Mormon Zion pure as an angel, but how does it leave it? Even roses and lilies in gardens most loved are tainted with a thousand impurities as soon as they unfold. I heard Brigham Young in the Tabernacle the other day warning his people that if they did not mend their manners angels would not come into their houses, though perchance they might be sauntering by with little else to do than chat with them. Possibly there may be salt families sufficiently pure for angel society, but I was not pleased with the reception they gave the small snow angels that God sent among them the other night. Only the children hailed them with delight. The old Latter-days seemed to shun them. I would like to see how Mr. Young, the Lake Prophet, would meet such messengers.

A GLORIOUS SCENE.

But to return to the storm: Towards the evening of the 18th it began to wither. The snowy skirts of the Wasatch appeared beneath the lifting cloud-fringes, and the sun shone out through colored windows, producing one of the most glorious after-storm effects I ever witnessed. Looking across the Jordan, the gray sagey slopes coming down from the base of the Oquirrh mountains were covered with a thick, flushy cloth of gold, soft and ethereal as a cloud, not merely tinted and gilded like a rock with autumn sunshine, but deeply muffled beyond all recognition. Surely nothing in heaven, nor any mansion of the Lord in all his worlds, could be more gloriously carpeted. Other portions of the plain were flushed with red and purple, and all the mountains and the clouds above them were painted in corresponding loveliness. Earth and sky, round and round the entire landscape, was one ravishing revelation of color, infinitely varied and interblended. I have seen many a glorious sunset beneath lifting storm clouds on the mountains, but nothing comparable with this. I felt as if new arrived in some other far off world. The mountains, the plains, the sky, all seemed new. Other experiences seemed but to have prepared me for this, as people are prepared for heaven. To describe the colors on a single mountain would, if it were possible at all, require many a volume—purples, and yellows, and delicious pearly grays divinely toned and interblended, and so richly put on one seemed to look down through the ground as through a sky. The disbanding clouds lingered lovingly about the mountains, filling the cañons like tinted wool, rising and drooping around the topmost peaks, fondling their rugged bases, or, sailing alongside, trailed their lustrous fringes through the pines as if taking a last view of their accomplished work. Then came darkness, and the glorious day and the storm was done.

SUMMER SUNSHINE.

This afternoon the Utah mountains and valleys seem to belong to our own very world again. They are covered with common sunshine. Down here on the banks of the Jordan larks and redwings are swinging on the rushes; the balmy air is instinct with immortal life; the wild flowers, the grass and the farmers' grain are fresh as if like the snow they had come out of heaven, and the last of the angel clouds are fleeing from the mountains.

JOHN MUIR.