

PERUSAL SCRIPT

Preposterous Parley P!

The Life and Times of Parley P Pratt

by **Thom Duncan**



Newport, Maine

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PREPOSTEROUS PARLEY P!

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

They can all be played by one actor or by multiple actors

PARLEY P. PRATT -- as an elder man

PARLEY at 20

SCHOOL TEACHER

MR. HAMLIN

MR. PEABODY

MRS. PHELPS

YOUNG BOY of 10 or 12 years of age

REVEREND DOTSON, a Baptist Minister

NOTE: The character of JOSEPH SMITH is only quoted by PARLEY, he should not be played by another actor. Neither should the DEVIL or MRS. BREWER. This is PARLEY's own 'One Man Show.'

NOTE: It would be somewhat destructive to actually have an ELDER HIGGINSON present and doing nothing throughout the entire play but watching. Please, let him remain an imaginary character.

SCENES

ACT ONE

PROLOGUE

SCENE ONE: Parley recounts his life

SCENE TWO: Childhood - Education

SCENE THREE: Marries Thankful

SCENE FOUR: Strange Book

SCENE FIVE: Parley's Mission

SCENE SIX: His Testimony of Joseph

ACT TWO

SCENE SEVEN: Escape From Columbia

SCENE EIGHT: Handle Me and See

SCENE NINE: Duking It Out With Dotson

SCENE TEN: Joe Smith and the Devil

SCENE ELEVEN: Joseph's Death

SCENE TWELVE: Joseph In Richmond Jail

SCENE THIRTEEN: Parley's Last Letter

SCENE FOURTEEN: Parley Says Goodbye

EPILOGUE

PROPERTIES, COSTUME REQUIREMENTS, AND SET PIECES

Prison window (hanging)

Wooden bed

Wooden barrel

Desk

Chair

Pitcher filled with water

Water bowl

Carpet bag

(Inside the carpet bag Bible)

Book of Mormon (1830 edition)

Doctrine and Covenants

Parley's Pamphlet, "Joe Smith and the Devil"

Various letters in the bag

Wide-brimmed hat

Small stool or chair

Quill pen

Ink bottle

Worn journal

Wooden matches

Lantern or candle

SOUND EFFECTS

Knocking on door

Dog barking

Key turning in iron lock

Townspeople chasing Parley

Door creaking open

Canal boat

Gun shots (Joseph's martyrdom) and

Joseph's Voice: "O Lord, My God."

NOTE: The *[or not]* in the stage directions refer to the actor who would normally be playing PARLEY in a one man show, not taking on the persona of these other characters, but actually having other actors performing the other roles.

ACT I

PROLOGUE

SETTING: The theatre

AT RISE: MUSIC in the darkness, a recorded narration:

NARRATOR

Soon after the extract from his journal, President Parley P. Pratt left St. Louis, Missouri, for Arkansas, where he was followed by three men who had previously declared their intention to kill him. To aid them in their designs, they preferred fictitious charges against him, and he was arrested and thrust into prison at Van Buren, there to await trial, and, hopefully, vindication, by a United States Court.

MUSIC OUT.

SCENE ONE -- RECOUNTS HIS LIFE

SETTING: A jail in Van Buren, Arkansas, May 13, 1857. Upstage center is a WINDOW suspended in mid-air. Directly in front of the window is a WOODEN BED, and next to that a WOODEN BARREL. Stage right is a DESK and a CHAIR. Sitting on the desk is a BOWL and PITCHER. Slumped over the end of the bed is Parley's CARPET BAG, and, over that, his GREAT COAT. A WIDE-BRIMMED HAT hangs from one post on the bed. Extreme downstage left is a SMALL STOOL, on which the invisible Elder George B. HIGGINSON sits, and to whom PARLEY will speak as he recounts his life.

AT RISE: Dim light finds PARLEY P. PRATT sitting at the desk, writing with a PEN in his JOURNAL. He writes a bit, then notices how dark it is. He finds a MATCH in his pocket, strikes it against the table, and lights a match then the LANTERN.

LIGHTS UP.

PARLEY blows out the match and starts writing again. Without looking up, he speaks to HIGGINSON.

PARLEY

Really, Elder Higginson, surely you have something better to do than to pace back and forth like a caged animal?

(Pause)

Yes, yes. You're right. We are rather like caged animals, aren't we?

(Looks up.)

I apologize, brother. I suppose I am more used to incarceration than are you.

(Puts down his pen and thinks.)

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How many times has it been?

(Counts on his fingers, picks up his pen, makes some marks on the desk, adds up the numbers, then takes stage as he speaks)

Welcome to Episode Thirty-Eight in this continuing saga of a sincere, hard-working, humble Apostle of the Lord -- me -- as he endeavors to plant the standard of truth in the midst of a world which has almost entirely given itself over to the denizens of hell.

I refer by the number thirty-eight to the amount of times that I, a minister of the Gospel of Christ, have personally been in attendance before various courts of law on trial for such crimes as treason, murder, and -- as now -- theft of laundry, a trumped up charge by one Hector McLean who, in reality, does not seem willing to accept the fact that his estranged wife, Eleanor McComb, has converted to the true gospel and, in the process, received the added blessing of becoming my twelfth wife.

It should be no great shock to you to learn I have become so acquainted with the jails of our fair land if I further tell you that by using the terms "denizens of hell" in my previous diatribe, I do not mean to make reference to that pitiable one-third of the hosts of heaven which followed Lucifer, but that I am referring to the priests of the secular religions who sneak about under the guise of Christianity and who are so jealous of the rising popularity of the Restored Gospel that they will resort to any and all means to vilify and calumniate this sacred work, even to the extent of originating imaginary crimes, and insinuating myself -- Parley Parker Pratt -- as the perpetrator thereof.

But I have grown resigned to my lot in life. These periodic "invitations" to visit the cells and prisons of this supposed land of the free force unwanted but, in retrospect, I suppose needed respites from the work of the building up of Zion. The accommodations are usually less than adequate, and being surrounded by -- for the most part -- drunken and slovenly guards, is a circumstance not calculated to elevate one's mind or to invigorate one's sagging spirits.

So prayer and meditation seem to occupy a great deal of my time.

And memories . . . Ah! What memories I have accumulated over my fifty-year sojourn on this mortal sphere.

(Gets his journal from the desk)

And they are all contained in volumes similar to this, all of which together constitute my journal, which has accompanied me on all my travels. It has been my one constant missionary companion, from Missouri to Canada, to England, to Hawaii, to South America. I propose to someday make a book of it, therein recounting the history of my travels and adventures to anyone who might be interested in reading it.

(HIGGINSON says something)

You mean, now? Out loud? To you? A splendid idea, Elder Higginson. It will help to pass the time while we wait to be conducted to that travesty of justice our keepers have the temerity to call "a trial."

SCENE TWO -- CHILDHOOD - EDUCATION

SETTING: The jail

AT RISE: Parley reads from his journal to the imaginary HIGGINSON.

PARLEY

“Parentage. Childhood. Youth. Education.”

I was the third son of Jared and Charity Pratt, of Canaan, Columbia County, New York and was born on April twelve, eighteen ought seven, in Burlington, Otsego Country, New York. Of my youth I will but little . . .

(Lost in memory, sets down his journal)

. . . except that, though of limited formal education, I always loved a book! If I worked hard, a book was in my hands in the morning while others were sitting down to breakfast; the same at noon; if I had a few moments, a book! A BOOK! A book at evening, while others slept or sported; a book on Sundays; a book at every leisure moment of my life.

(Parley retrieves a BIBLE from his bag, thumbs through it)

At the age of seven years my mother gave me lessons to read in the Scriptures; I read of Joseph in Egypt and was inspired with the power of love. I read of Samson and the Philistines and was inspired with hatred for the deeds of evildoers and love for good men and their deeds.

(Pause)

I read of Jesus and his Apostles; and . . . Oh, how I loved them! How I longed to fall at the feet of Jesus; to worship him, or to offer my life for his.

(Pause)

And so my life has ever since been dedicated to the Master. My life is His. If it so be that he desires to take it from me, who am I to kick against it?

(Pause)

In the sixteenth year of my life, I boarded out to one of my aunts -- my father's sister -- by the name of Lovina Van Cott. She was an excellent and kind-hearted woman, and acted as a mother to me, the winter I boarded there. I spent most of my time in school, and it was my last opportunity to improve my education by any means, except my own unaided exertion. While at this school, and by close application, I made such extraordinary progress that the teacher often spoke of me to the whole school.

(Parley impersonates the SCHOOL TEACHER [or not])

SCHOOL TEACHER

You should all learn as does young Pratt,

PARLEY

said he, to some of them who were more fond of mischief than of study.

SCHOOL TEACHER

For if you do, you will become men of great wisdom and talent in the world; but if you continue the course you have done you will remain in obscurity and unknown; while he will be known, and fill important stations in society.

(Pause, smiles at HIGGINSON)

PARLEY

I do not mention these circumstances by way of boasting; but simply because they are true.

When Spring returned, I commenced assisting my cousin William Pratt in the cultivation of my Aunt's farm

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until September, and then worked for the next three years, endeavoring to earn enough money to pay for a seventy-acre farm that Will and I had bought. We ultimately failed in procuring enough money, the farm was wrested us from us by some greedy and nefarious bankers . . . and so it was that on the Fourth of July, eighteen hundred and twenty-seven, at the age of twenty, I resolved to return to my native country, from which I had been absent several years.

(Pause, smiles in fond memory)

For there was one there whom my heart had long loved, and from whom I would not have been so long separated, except by the gravest misfortune.

SCENE THREE -- Marries Thankful

SETTING: Canaan, New York, 1827

AT RISE: PARLEY crosses to a part of the stage that is soon to become the home of Thankful Halsey, picks up his journal, and reads.

PARLEY

“Eighteen twenty-seven. Revisit Canaan, New York. Interesting meeting. Marriage.

(Pause)

“Description of my wife.”

(Puts down journal)

The morning of my return was exceedingly beautiful: the sun rose in a cloudless sky over the pine-clad hills of my native land, where in boyhood I had often toiled and sported . . . when, of course, I hadn't been reading a book.

I had, during my absence of three years, exchanged the features of the bashful boy for those of the man; and, instead of a laughing, careless countenance, I now possessed a forehead of marble and a cheek of rose. Stern care had marked me as her child, and the sun had given a deep shade of brown to my features; these, added to a heavy growth of beard and whiskers, disguised me so far that I could pass through the neighborhood of people, known and familiar to me, completely and utterly unnoticed.

With a quick step, a beating heart, and an intense, indescribable feeling of joy, sorrow, hope, despondency and happiness, I approached the door of Mr. Halsey, and knocked.

(“knocks” on the door, while kicking the stage.)

(Or . . .)

(SOUND: KNOCKING ON DOOR)

(He impersonates his younger self [or not])

PARLEY (AT 20)

Parley Parker Pratt, calling on miss Thankful Halsey, please.

PARLEY

She came, and with a look of welcome which showed she had not forgotten me. I spent the day and evening with her; explained to her all my losses, my poverty and prospects, and the preparations I had made for a

future home.

PARLEY (AT 20)

Wherefore, Miss Halsey, in view of all these things, if you still love me and desire to share my fortune you are worthy to be my wife. If not, we will agree to be friends forever; but part to meet no more in time.

PARLEY

“I have loved you during three years' absence,” said she, “and I never can be happy without you.”

(Pause)

On the ninth of September, eighteen hundred twenty-seven, Parley Parker Pratt and Miss Thankful Halsey were united in the bonds of matrimony by Elder Palmer, Minister of the Baptist Church, in Canaan, Columbia County, New York.

(Reminisces)

My wife was tall, of a slender frame, her face of an oval form, eyes large and of a dark color, her forehead lofty, clear complexion, hair black, smooth and glossy. She was of a mild and affectionate disposition and full of energy, industry, and cheerfulness. In matters of neatness and refinement of taste she might be said to excel. She was an affectionate and dutiful wife, an exemplary Saint . . . but now, after much tribulation, she has gone to the world of spirits to meet a glorious resurrection and an immortal crown and kingdom.

(Pause)

After waiting eleven years to give birth to our first child . . . a son . . . she died but a scant three hours afterwards.

(Pause)

How often in my sleeping visions do I see my beloved wife, or my playful children surrounded with the pleasures of home in our sweet little cottage, or walk with them in some pleasant grove or flowery field, as in years past.

(To himself)

Farewell, my dear Thankful, thou wife of my youth, and mother of my first born; the beginning of my strength -- farewell. Yet a few more lingering years of sorrow, pain, and toil, and I shall be with thee, and clasp thee to my bosom, and thou shalt sit down on my throne, as a queen and priestess unto thy lord, arrayed in white robes of dazzling splendor and decked with precious stones and gold, while thy queen sisters shall minister before thee and bless thee, and thy sons and daughters innumerable shall call thee blessed, and hold thy name in everlasting remembrance.

SCENE FOUR -- STRANGE BOOK

SETTING: The jail

AT RISE: PARLEY picks up his journal and reads a passage to HIGGINSON.

PARLEY

“August eighteen-thirty. Our Home. New Sect. Progressive Religious Views. Forsake My Home. Journey to New York. Public Ministry. Strange Book. First Interview with a Latter-day Saint.”

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(Puts down journal)

Some eighteen months after our marriage, when my wife and I had repaired to Ohio there to commence our life together, there came into our town an itinerant preacher by the name of Sidney Rigdon. At length I went to hear him speak, and what was my astonishment when I found he preached faith in Jesus Christ, repentance, and baptism for the remission of sins, with the promise of the gift of the Holy Ghost to all who would come forward, with all their hearts, and obey this doctrine!

Why, here was the ancient gospel in due form! But still one great link was wanting to complete the chain of the ancient order of things: the authority to minister in the holy ordinances.

(Addresses an unseen Sidney Rigdon)

Peter proclaimed this gospel, and baptized for the remission of sins, and promised the gift of the Holy Ghost, because he was commissioned so to do by a crucified and risen Savior. But who ordained you? Why, the Baptists of course! And you have left them because they did not administer the true gospel. It might be said, then, with propriety: "Peter I know, and Paul I know, but, Sidney Rigdon, who are you?"

(Back to HIGGINSON)

However, we were thankful for even the forms of truth, as none could claim the power, and authority, and gifts of the Holy Ghost -- at least so far as we knew.

About this time I took it upon myself to impart to my neighbors, both in public and in private, the light which I had received from the Scriptures concerning the fulfillment of the things spoken by the holy prophets. I claimed no authority as a minister; I felt the lack in this respect; but I felt in duty bound to enlighten mankind, so far as God had enlightened me.

In accordance with this determination, in August, eighteen thirty, I closed my business, and we bid adieu to our wilderness home and never saw it afterwards.

On settling up, at a great sacrifice of property, we had about ten dollars left in cash. With this tidy little sum, we launched forth into the cold, cruel, world, determining first to visit our native place, and then such other places as I might be led to by the Holy Spirit.

Arriving at Rochester, a trip which cost us all our money and some articles of clothing, I informed my wife that, notwithstanding our passage being paid through the whole distance, yet I must leave the boat and her to pursue her passage to our friends; while I would stop awhile in this region. Why, I did not know; but so it was plainly manifest by the Spirit to me.

To my utter amazement, she agreed! I accompanied her as far as Newark, a small town upwards of on hundred miles from Buffalo, and then took leave of her.

It was early in the morning, just at the dawn of day, and I walked ten miles into the country, and stopped to breakfast with a Mr. Wells. I proposed to preach in the evening, so Mr. Wells readily accompanied me through the neighborhood to visit the people, and to circulate the appointment.

In the course of so doing, we visited an old Baptist deacon by the name of Hamlin. After hearing of our appointment for evening, he began to tell of . . .

(Impersonates DEACON HAMLIN [or not])

HAMLIN

A book, a STRANGE BOOK, a VERY STRANGE BOOK!

(Spits out a long string of imaginary tobacco juice into the pitcher, now acting as a spittoon)

This here book, or so says the young feller what sold it to me, was written on plates o' gold, by a branch of the

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tribes of Israel. And these plates, they was discovered and translated by a young feller out Palmyra way, in the State of New York, by the aid of visions!

PARLEY

“Where may I obtain a copy of the book?” I inquired.

HAMLIN

(After looking PARLEY up and down)

Well, you look to be a fine young feller. You come back tomorra, I reckon I'll give ya a gander at it.

PARLEY

I preached that evening to a small audience, who appeared interested in the truths I taught them from the Scriptures. But my thoughts were elsewhere -- on that book. I didn't know why at the time that I had such a strange interest in the book. Next morning I called at his house, where, for the first time, my eyes beheld the Book of Mormon.

(Pause, retrieves a BOOK OF MORMON from his bag)

That book of books -- that book which was the principal means, in the hands of God, of directing the entire course of my future life.

I thanked Deacon Hamlin for the book, walked directly into the forest, sat down on the first tree stump I could find and commenced the book's contents by course. I read all day. Eating was a burden; I had no desire for food. Sleep was a burden when the night came, for I preferred reading to sleep.

And as I read, the spirit of the Lord was upon me, and I knew that the book was true, as plainly and manifestly as a man knows that he exists, and I rejoiced sufficiently to more than pay me for all the sorrows, sacrifices, and toils of my life.

To my great joy I found that Jesus Christ, in his glorified resurrected body, had appeared to the remnant of Joseph on the continent of America; and that he also visited the lost tribes, and that through his personal ministry his gospel was revealed and written in countries and among nations entirely unknown to the Jewish apostles.

(Slips into preaching mode, to an imaginary congregation.)

For Jesus, in his mortal tabernacle, confined his ministry to the land of Judea; but afterwards, released from the bonds of death, and clothed with an immortal body, he possessed all power in heaven and on earth. He could take the wings of the morning, and, with the speed of light, make his way to the Heaven of Heavens; there to converse among the sons of God; or receive counsel from his Father in Heaven; or, leaving again the starry worlds, he could descend to the dark and gloomy abodes of the spirits in prison and preach to them the gospel, bursting off their shackles and unlocking their prison doors. Or, coming again to visit the earth, he could soar away beyond the waves and tempests, which before had stood as impregnable barriers to the intercourse of nations; and there, in other tribes and tongues, make known the riches of his grace, and of his triumph over death.

And when ages had passed, and nations slumbered in the dust -- when cruelty and bloodshed had blotted almost every trace of priesthood from the earth; when saints had been worn out and overcome; times, laws, and ordinances changed; the Bible itself robbed of its very plainness; and all things darkened and corrupted -- a pure and faithful record of his ministry to other nations is forthcoming from among the archives of the dead, to speak with a voice of thunder, in rebuking evil and revealing the fullness of the everlasting gospel!

Such is the Book of Mormon -- such its effect upon the startling nations.

(Back to HIGGINSON)

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I soon determined to meet the young man who had been instrumental in the book's discovery and translation. I accordingly visited the village of Palmyra and inquired as to the residence of Mr. Joseph Smith. I found it some two miles out of town, and as I approached it toward evening, I overtook a man driving some cattle.

(with the Book of Mormon in hand, moves to another area of the stage)

Excuse me, Sir, could you direct me to the residence of Mr. Joseph Smith, the translator of the Book of Mormon?

(Pause)

Pennsylvania? But that's over a hundred miles from here. Is any of his family nearby? His father perhaps -- ?

You're his brother, Hyrum? This is indeed an honor, Sir -- Wait! Wait! Hyrum Smith, did you say?

(Opens the Book of Mormon to the front pages)

The same Hyrum Smith who says herein that he saw the gold plates and handled them?

(Pantomimes shaking hands with Hyrum)

Then I am doubly honored, Sir! To receive such a blessing --

(Pause as he listens to something Hyrum asks him)

Oh, yes, I believe the book. I read it straight through in a single sitting and know it to be the word of God. I have come all this way that I may meet Joseph Smith and learn more of the book.

(To HIGGINSON)

He welcomed me to his house, where he laid before me the particulars of the discovery of the book; its translation; the rise of the Church of Latter-day Saints, as it was then called, and the commission of his brother Joseph, and others, by revelation and the ministering of angels, by which the apostleship had been again restored to the earth. After duly weighing the whole matter in my mind I saw clearly that these things were true; and that myself and the whole world were without baptism, and without the ministry and ordinances of God; and had been in this condition since the days that inspiration and revelation had ceased -- in short, that this was a new dispensation to prepare the way before the second coming of the Lord.

In the morning, I was compelled to take leave of this worthy gentleman and his family as I had to hasten back some thirty miles on foot to fulfill an appointment to preach that evening.

(Takes the Bible, preaches to an imaginary crowd)

“Men and brethren, what shall we do?” And Peter answered them, saying, “Repent and be baptized.”

This is the way of the Gospel, my friends! Do not continue to embrace your dead religions with their dead ordinances. For, verily, they are a “form of godliness, but deny the power thereof.”

(To HIMSELF)

“The power thereof” . . . There's the difference. I may believe from now till doomsday, but I have no power.

Surely my preaching is as tinkling cymbals, signifying nothing. I must have this power!

(To HIGGINSON)

I then returned immediately to Hyrum Smith's house and demanded baptism at his hands. I tarried with him that night, and the next day we walked some twenty-five miles to the residence of Mr. Whitmer, in Seneca County. This was the family, several of whose names are connected to the Book of Mormon as witnesses, Joseph Smith having translated much of the book in Whitmer's chambers.

We rested that night, and on the next day, being about the first of September, eighteen thirty, I was baptized by an Elder of the Church named Oliver Cowdery. This took place in Seneca Lake, a beautiful and transparent sheet of water in Western New York.

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A meeting was held the same evening, and after singing a hymn and prayer, Elder Cowdery and others proceeded to lay their hands on me in the name of Jesus, for the gift of the Holy Ghost. After which I was ordained to the office of an Elder.

I had found the missing link! The chain was now complete!

SCENE FIVE -- PARLEY'S MISSION

SETTING: The jail

AT RISE: PARLEY reads from the journal.

PARLEY

“October, eighteen thirty. Mission to the Western States. Wonderful Success in Kirtland. Imprisonment. Mock Trial. Ingenious Escape.”

(Puts away the journal, rummages in the bag for a copy of the DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS, opens it to read to HIGGINSON)

“And now, concerning my servant Parley P. Pratt, behold, I say unto him that as I live I will that he shall declare my gospel and learn of me, and be meek and lowly of heart.

“And that which I have appointed unto him is that he shall go with my servants, Oliver Cowdery, and Peter Whitmer, Junior, into the wilderness . . .

“And Ziba Peterson also shall go with them; and I myself will go with them and be in their midst . . . and nothing shall prevail against them.”

(To HIGGINSON)

Making arrangements for my wife in the family of the Whitmers, we took leave of our friends and the church late in October, and started on foot.

At length we called on Mr. Rigdon, my former friend and instructor, in the Reformed Baptists Society. He received us cordially and entertained us with hospitality.

We proceeded to ordain Sidney Rigdon, Isaac Morley, John Murdock, Lyman Wight, Edward Partridge and many others to the ministry; and, leaving them to take care of the churches and to minister the gospel, we took leave of the saints and continued our journey.

(Picks up the Book of Mormon)

We had stopped for the night at the house of Simeon Carter, by whom we were kindly received, and were in the very act of reading to him and explaining the Book of Mormon, when there came a knock at the door, and an officer entered with a warrant from a magistrate by the name of Byington, to arrest me on a very frivolous charge.

(Pantomimes the actions throughout this next paragraph)

I dropped the Book of Mormon in Carter's house and went with him some two miles, in a dark, muddy road, Ziba Peterson accompanying me. We arrived at the place of trial late in the evening; found false witnesses in attendance, and a Judge who boasted of his intention to thrust us into prison, for the purpose of testing the powers of our apostleship, as he called it; although I was only an Elder at the time. The judge boasting thus,

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and the witnesses being entirely false in their testimony, I concluded to make no defense, but to treat the whole matter with the contempt it deserved.

I was soon ordered to prison, or to pay a sum of money which I had not in the world. It was now a late hour, and I was still retained in court, tantalized, abused and continuously urged to “pay the money, pay the money,” to all of which I made no reply for some time. This greatly exhausted their patience. It was near midnight. I now called on brother Petersen to sing a hymn in the court. We sung:

(Sings, trying to get the imaginary court to join with him)

O HOW HAPPY ARE THEY
WHO THE SAVIOR OBEY,
AND HAVE LAID UP THEIR TREASURE ABOVE!
TONGUE CAN NEVER EXPRESS
THE SWEET COMFORT AND PEACE
OF A SOUL IN ITS EARLIEST LOVE.

(Speaks)

This exasperated them still more, and they pressed us greatly to settle the business, by paying the money. I then observed as follows:

(Takes stage, hands to lapels)

“May it please the court, I have one proposal to make for a final settlement of the things that seem to trouble you. It is this: if the witnesses who have given testimony in the case will repent of their false swearing, and the magistrate of his unjust and wicked judgment and of his persecution, blackguardism and abuse, and all kneel down together...

(Kneels)

... we will pray for you, that God might forgive you in these matters.”

(bows his head, closes his eyes. Pause. He opens one eye, looks around, then both eyes. Smiles. To HIGGINSON.)

Needless to say, my proposal was not entertained with any great enthusiasm by the court and I was conducted to a public house over the way, and locked in till morning, when the officer appeared and took me to breakfast. This over, we sat waiting in the inn for all things to be ready to conduct me to prison. After sitting awhile by the fire in charge of the officer, I requested to step out. I walked out into the public square accompanied by him.

(To PEABODY)

Mr. Peabody, are you good at a race?

PEABODY *(As Peabody [or not])*

No,

PARLEY

said he.

PEABODY

But my big bull dog Stu-boy is, and he has been trained to assist me in my office these several years; he will take any man down at my bidding.

PARLEY

Well, Mr. Peabody, you compelled me to go a mile, I have gone with you twain. You have given me an opportunity to preach, sing, and have also entertained me with lodging and breakfast. I must now go on my

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journey; if you are good at a race you can accompany me. I thank you for all your kindness -- good day, sir.

(To HIGGINSON)

I then started on my journey, while he stood amazed and not able to step one foot before the other. Seeing this, I halted, turned to him, and again invited him to a race. He still stood amazed.

(Runs in place)

I then renewed my exertions, and soon increased my speed to something like that of a deer.

(SOUND; OF A DOG BARKING)

He did not awake from his astonishment sufficiently to start in pursuit till I had gained, perhaps, two hundred yards. I had already leaped a fence, and was making my way through a field to the forest on the right of the road. He now came halloo-ing after me, and shouting to his dog to seize me.

The dog, being one of the largest I ever saw, came close on my footsteps with all his fury; the officer behind still in pursuit, clapping his hands and hallooing:

PEABODY

Stu-boy, Stu-boy -- take him -- watch -- lay hold of him, I say -- down with him!

PARLEY

and pointing his finger in the direction I was running.

The dog was fast overtaking me, and in the act of leaping upon me, when, quick as lightning, the thought struck me, to assist the officer, in sending the dog with all fury to the forest a little distance before me. I pointed my finger in that direction, clapped my hands, and shouted in imitation of the officer. The dog hastened past me with redoubled speed towards the forest; being urged by the officer and myself, and both of us running in the same direction.

(Has a good laugh at this as does, hopefully, the audience; catches his breath)

The Book of Mormon, which I dropped at the house of Simeon Carter, when taken by the officer, was by these circumstances left with him. He read it with attention. It wrought deeply upon his mind, and he went fifty miles to the church we had left in Kirtland, and was there baptized and ordained an Elder. He then returned to his home and commenced to preach and baptize. A church of about sixty members was soon organized in the place where I had played such a trick of deception on the dog.

SCENE SIX -- HIS TESTIMONY OF JOSEPH

SETTING: The jail

AT RISE: PARLEY speaks to HIGGINSON.

PARLEY

I suppose it is due to occurrences such as these that I have become known as "Preposterous Parley P.!" by my enemies and by some of my more reticent friends. But as the revelation says,

"With some I am not well pleased, for they will not open their mouth, but they hide the talent which I have given them, because of the fear of men. Wo be unto such, for mine anger is kindled against them."

Now, Elder Higginson, I do not know about what it means exactly to have the anger of the Lord kindled against

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one, but neither am I in too great a haste to discover it!

But only because . . . because I have sat many times in the presence of Joseph Smith and know to be true this work which he, as an instrument in the hands of God, has instigated in these latter days. I have gazed upon his face while he was transcended in heavenly visions; I have seen him laugh heartily during a rousing game of pull the stick. I have spent long hours of discourse with him, and he always received me with a hearty welcome, and with that frank and kind manner so universal with him in later years.

(Pause)

He was tall and well-built, strong and active; of a light complexion, light hair, blue eyes, very little beard, and of an expression peculiar to himself, on which the eye naturally rested with interest, and was never weary of beholding. His countenance was ever mild, affable, beaming with intelligence and benevolence; mingled with a look of interest and an unconscious smile -- and all of this entirely free from any affectation of gravity or severity. And there was . . . something . . . connected with the serene and steady penetrating glance of his eye, as if he could pierce the deepest abyss of the human heart, gaze into eternity, scan the heavens, and comprehend all worlds.

He possessed a noble boldness and independence of character. His manner was easy and familiar, his rebuke as terrible as the lion, his benevolence unbounded as the ocean; his intelligence universal, and his language abounding in original eloquence peculiar to himself -- not polished -- not studied, not smoothed and softened by education and refined by art; but flowing forth in its own native simplicity, and profusely abounding in variety of subject and manner. He interested and edified, while, at the same time, he amused and entertained his audience; and none listened to him that were ever weary with his discourse. I have even known him to retain a congregation of willing and anxious listeners for many hours together, in the midst of cold or sunshine, rain or wind, while they were laughing at one moment and weeping the next. Even his most bitter enemies were generally overcome, if he could once get their ears.

And had he been spared a martyr's fate till mature manhood, he was certainly endued with abilities sufficient to have revolutionized the world in many respects, and to have transmitted to posterity a name associated with more brilliant and glorious acts than has yet fallen to the lot of mortal.

As it is, his works will live to endless ages, and unnumbered millions yet unborn will mention his name with honor, as a noble instrument in the hands of God, who, during his short and youthful career, laid the foundation of that kingdom spoken of by Daniel, the prophet, which should break in pieces all other kingdoms and stand forever.

(Pause. PARLEY gathers himself, crosses to the "door," looks out.)

PARLEY

Come, Elder Higginson, it appears our trial is about to begin.

(He steps aside, lets ELDER HIGGINSON exit before him. To HIGGINSON, as PARLEY exits)

By the way, Elder Higginson, do you know all the words to "Happy Are They?"

END OF ACT I

(If there is an intermission, it should go here)

14 PAGES IN ACT TWO