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PREFACE

THERE are seven historic trails crossing the great plains of the interior of the continent, all of which for a portion of their distance traverse the geographical limits of what is now the prosperous commonwealth of Kansas.

None of these primitive highways, however, with the exception of that oldest of all to far-off Santa Fé, has a more stirring story than that known as the Salt Lake Trail.

Over this historical highway the Mormons made their lonely Hegira to the valley of that vast inland sea. On its shores they established a city, marvellous in its conception, and a monument to the ability of man to overcome almost insuperable obstacles—the product of a faith equal to that which inspired the crusader to battle to the death for the possession of the Holy Sepulchre.

Over this route, also, were made those world-renowned expeditions by Fremont, Stansbury, Lander, and others of lesser fame, to the heart of the Rocky Mountains, and beyond, to the blue shores of the Pacific Ocean.

Over the same trackless waste the Pony Express executed those marvellous feats in annihilating distance, and the once famous Overland Stage lumbered along through the seemingly interminable desert of sage-brush and alkali dust—*avant-courrières* of the telegraph and the railroad.

One of the collaborators of this volume, Colonel W. F. Cody ("Buffalo Bill"), began his remarkable career, as a boy, on the Salt Lake Trail, and laid the foundations of a life which has made him a conspicuous American figure at the close of this century.

It is not the intention of the authors of this work to deal in the slightest manner with Mormonism as a religion. An immense mass of literature on the subject is to be found in every public library, both in its defence and in its condemnation. The latter preponderates, and often seems to be inspired by an inexcusable ingenuity in exaggeration.

Of the trials of the Mormons during their toilsome march and their difficulties with the government during the Civil War, this work will treat in a limited way, but its scope is to present the story of the Trail in the days long before the building of a railroad was believed to be possible. It will deal with the era of the trapper, the scout, the savage, and the passage of emigrants to the gold fields of California — when the only route was by the overland trail — and with the adventures which marked the long and weary march.