



CORINNE, THE GENTILE CITY

"Now there were dance halls in Corinne, six miles to the west, but we weren't supposed to go' there. The gentiles were running the place and it was a bad influence."

Corinne had grown up over night as a railroad boomtown. Enterprising land investors and railroad crews were responsible for the town's beginning and initial growth in 1869, the year of the completion of the trans-continental railroad. During the next two decades it continued to prosper as a rail and freight junction, until the completion of branch rail lines into Ogden from the north did away with the need to freight by wagon to Corinne.

In addition to the glitter and fascination of its seamy side, at the height of its booming period the city boasted a population of several thousand non-Mormons, with their churches, public schools, and typical solid-citizen family interests.

Needless to say, however, the reputation of the bawdy city during its heyday was that of a virtual "Babylon." Perhaps Marc Antony's lament about the fate of men applies to cities as well, that the evil they do "lives after them while the good is oft interred with their bones." With a disproportionate number of saloons, dance halls and brothels lining its main street, it is not astonishing that the brethren in Brigham City admonished all saints in good standing to stay away from Corinne, that they might rather "yield themselves to the enticings of the Holy Spirit and avoid even the appearance of evil."

Although the document was later ruled invalid and illegal by a federal court, it was possible for a short period to obtain a "legal and duly signed" divorce writ from a vending machine in the front office of a law firm in Corinne. One operated the vendor like a slot machine. By putting the required gold piece in the slot and manipulating the handle a properly engraved instrument of divorce was turned out complete except for writing in the necessary statistics.

"There was quite a bit of commotion in town about that time over the family problems of one of the brothers. The High Priests' Quorum had sent a visiting committee to reason with one of his wives who was stirring up all the trouble. He had taken a shine to her before their marriage because she was such a handsome woman, and I guess he'd married her more for her good looks than from the promptings of good sense. He found out too late that she wouldn't live the law of celestial marriage.

The brother had gone to the bishop complaining that she refused to allow herself to get in a family way. The bishop agreed with him that since he'd paid the fiddler he ought to be able to call the tune, but she wouldn't come down off her high horse. The visiting committee hadn't had any better success with her and reported back to the quorum that she was contrary and cantankerous and would probably take her case to the "gentile court."

Bishop Tingey and Patriarch Box spoke consoling to the brother but he decided to jump the gun and take matters into his own hands. One morning real early he sneaked over to Corinne and got a divorce paper from Johnson's infernal machine and presented it to her unbeknown to the brethren. She took her case to the "gentile court" alright and his divorce was declared null and void. Funny thing the way it all ended. They went back together again and agreed on terms rather than have any more public furor over the thing. I guess it's clear as to the terms of the agreement 'cause to this day she's never been in a delicate way."