SPIRITUAL WIVES.

BY

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

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CHAPTER X.

WORDEN'S CONFESSION.

Marquis L. Worden, a staid and sober person, fifty-five years old, is a married man, and the father of a family. I made his acquaintance in New York State. He was a farmer of good standing, and of fair education for his class. He lived in the first burnt district; and his religious trials, which, up to a certain point in his life, were those of many thousands of his countrymen (a fact to give them value in the eyes of all social students), are told in the following paper, which he drew up for me at my request:

"New York, Dec. 15, 1866.

"In undertaking to give you my recollections of Spiritual wifehood, I must necessarily relate more or less of personal history and experience; and at best I may not be able to throw much light on a
subject wrapped, as I think this is, in the mystery of religious enthusiasm.

"It is common with religious sects, and especially with individuals of the highest spiritual attainments, in times of fervent zeal, to think of God and Providence as arranging their future in reference to social companionship. They have come into the presence of God and the powers above, and therefore recognise a higher law over their impulses and passions, and offer their hearts to its guidance rather than to the law of human ordinances. Thus it can be seen how wives might be claimed under the prerogatives of the Spirit.

"I was born in 1813, at Manlius, Onondaga County, New York. It was about the time I was twenty-one (1834) that I was baptized by immersion, and taken into full communion with the Methodist Episcopal Church. In the last days of the same year, I became a convert to Methodist Perfectionism. So I consider this as a sort of pivotal period from which I look backward and forward in my history. To me the year 1834 was throughout a year of earnestness, devotion, and religious activity. Revivals prevailed in the neighbourhoods and region round about Manlius, and through the country in which the
New Measure Evangelists, such as Luther Meyrick, Horatio Foot, and James Boyle, led the way, and it was my pleasure to unite in zeal and effort with them, under the Union religious sentiments which were popular at the time. I did not know anything of Perfectionism until the fall of 1834, although the Sheldons and others in Delphi, but fifteen miles distant, had been testifying to salvation from sin for a year or more. Martin P. Sweet and Jarvis Rider of De Ruyter village, near Delphi, became Perfectionists under the Sheldons’ preaching, and travelled together as apostles, preaching from place to place, or, as they called it, bearing witness to salvation from sin. They went to Syracuse, to Owego, and finally came to Manlius’ Centre, where the Cook and Mabie families, who had been agitated by revivals during the summer, received them and were converted. By and by I came in contact with them, and received one or more of the first numbers of the Perfectionist, then recently published in New Haven. The perusal of these papers, together with the testimony of these persons, led me to desire, through new convictions and aspirations, an experience both deeper and higher than I had attained, and it was joyfully
realised at about the close of the year. I had a calm trust in God and grateful sense of deliverance; had no disorderly intentions; and supposed I was still a Unionist or Methodist; but the people who were called by these names did not receive my testimony, and their coldness sent me to the genial warmth of Perfectionists, with whom I henceforth affiliated.

"I can conscientiously say that those early manifestations of New York pietry were characterised by earnestness, zeal, and power; and that the influence of individuals by their faith and daily life was convincing to their neighbours that they held a holier faith, and lived better lives, than common men. They believed in salvation from sin; that 'whosoever is born of God doth not sin, and cannot sin because he is born of God,' and has no disposition to sin; that 'whosoever sinneth is of the devil.' They believed that they were led by the Spirit. They rejoiced in deliverance from what they called Babylonish captivity, or the legality of the churches, and no doubt this sentiment finally affected their feelings and practice in various ways, and especially was applied to domestic and social relations. Here we come to the beginning of the Spiritual-wife theory.
"There was in Delphi an early believer, Lucina Umphreville by name,—a young woman of fair appearance, good ability, and of prepossessing manners, who seemed to set herself up as a sort of Ann Lee, the advocate of spiritual love, in opposition to carnal love, Lucina rejected marriage.

"I came under this anti-marriage theory and influence, and have reason to believe it was common throughout my acquaintance. But during its prevalence, the idea of special companionship of the male with some particular female existed in a silent, undemonstrative way, and found expression occasionally. I remember the impression I was under, from what I heard in some quarters, that this lady champion of no-marriage and no-intercourse herself was at one time considered the better half in spiritual union with Jarvis Rider, because 'the man was not without the woman in the Lord.'

"This spiritual union too, so far as I recollect my impressions, was conceded to be a state of high attainment, for Lucina always quoted the text, 'They that are accounted worthy to obtain that world do not marry, but are as the angels of God.' So the relation was considered sacred, pure, and spiritual.
"In the spring of 1836, Maria Brown, of Brimfield notoriety, came to Manlius Centre. At that period some changes had come over these peculiar theories and relations of the brethren and sisters. Jarvis Rider had become much attached to a married woman, a sister whom we all very much appreciated and loved for her beauty of character and goodness of heart. At the same time, Miss Anti-Marriage (Lucina Umphreville) was appropriated by Charles Lovett in the same sense as Brother Rider had previously held her. Meanwhile the married sister's husband became disturbed and anxious, and in a fit of mad jealousy took his horsewhip, and applied it furiously to Brother Rider's back, and sent him in haste out of doors. But afterwards, through compunction of conscience and other influences, this furious brother repented, and restored Brother Rider to his family and confidence, with confessions, regrets, and humiliations, and the course of love ran smooth again. But in the sequel there was some reason to believe that the relation became so far carnal as to lay just foundations for scandal.

"I do not know that the Spiritual-wife theory was organised and put in operation by these or
any other similar transactions before and after them, but that phraseology was used to some extent among us. My impression is that its origin might be traced to reports and scandals coming in from Palmyra, Wagnelo, N.Y., where Joe Smith, since about 1829, had been developing Mormonism. I notice in the History of the Mormons that mention is made of Smith's inducing several women to cohabit with him whom he called Spiritual Wives. The time is given as 1838, and it was not until 1842 that he received his revelation authorising polygamy. But I have the impression that there were in circulation stories about his Spiritual Wives long before that date.

"Whether there was anything of account, in theory or practice, beyond such incidents as I have mentioned, to indicate the inauguration of Spiritual Wifehood in central New York, I cannot say; but I judge that some theory of the kind did exist in fact in the minds and hearts of the revival body as a whole. My impression is that Erasmus Stone acted more or less on such ideas in his relations with Eliza Porter. And Hiram Sheldon had a time of seeing in Sophia A. Cooke what he failed to
appreciate in his own wife. There was quite a general expectation that the resurrection was soon coming to reorganise society, and provide personal companionship of male and female without regard to law or other marriage institutions. But as to carnal love, it was in many minds a pollution, not to be tolerated, but to be crucified with the carnal mind, which is not 'subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.'

"Years passed on. The weakness of some was manifest in their being overcome by the passions which they had condemned, and declared crucified and dead; in others by the surrender to the marriage relation, and I began to wonder what the end would be. Finally, my own attachment concentrated on a young lady who stood, in heart, firmly on the theory of no marriage. Purity and community with the angels was her motto. But I pushed in the direction of actual marriage. Formidable were the obstructions; among others, I found that Brother Charles Lovett had intimated that my chosen one was his affianced bride in the heavens. I waited yet awhile. But in the year 1839, on the 4th of March, I was married.

"MARQUIS L. WORDEN."
All that is said in this confession by way of fact, known to the writer, is no doubt true. It is only when Worden comes to hearsay and fancy that he goes wrong. His "impression" that the theory of Spiritual Wives may have come from the Mormons of Palmyra, has no foundation to rest on.

The story of Mary Cragin's Spiritual trials, which gives us a deeper insight into the working of these morbid passions, may now be told.
that their societies are the only births that come of Revivals. Mormonism, doubtless, came out of the same fertile soil. Joe Smith began his career in central New York, among a population that was fermenting with the hope of the Millennium, and at a time when the great National Revival was going forth in its strength. The order of things in this birth was the same that we have seen among the bundling Perfectionists,—first, Religion; then Socialism: Revivals and conversions of souls leading the way to Spiritual Wifehood, and finally to Polygamy. The completion of the sequence in this case seems to have taken two generations of leaders; Joe Smith laid the religious foundations, and Brigham Young has perfected the polygamy.

"The underlying principle here, as everywhere, is that which I started at first:—Revivals are in their nature theocratic; and a theocracy has an inexpugnable tendency to enter the domain of society and revolutionise the relations of man and wife. The resulting new forms of society will differ as the civilisation and inspiration of the revolutionists differ.

"One dominant peculiarity of the Shakers, as also of the Bundling Perfectionists, which deter-
mined their style of socialism, was, in my opinion, the Leadership of Women. Man of himself would never have invented Shakerism, and it would have been very difficult to have made him a medium of inspiration for the development of such a system. It is not in his line. But it is exactly adapted to the proclivities of women in a state of independence or ascendancy over man. Love between the sexes has two stages; the courting stage and the wedded stage. Women are fond of the first stage. Men are fond of the second. Women like to talk about love; but men want the love itself. Among the Perfectionists the women led the way in the bundling with purposes as chaste as those of the Shakers. For a time they had their way; but in time the men had their way.

"The course of things may be re-stated thus: Revivals lead to religious love; religious love excites the passions; the converts, finding themselves in theocratic liberty, begin to look about for their mates and their paradise. Here begins divergence. If women have the lead, the feminine idea that ordinary wedded love is carnal and unholy rises and becomes a ruling principle. Mating on the Spiritual plan, with all the heights and depths of sentimental love, becomes the order of
Spiritual wives were traced to Sydney Rigdon, Hiram Sheldon, or John H. Noyes. In the United States, this doctrine of spirit-brides has found an open field and a multitude of converts; and enjoys in that republic the advantages of a free pulpit and a free press. No rationalistic Ober-Präsidcnt could silence a New York Ebel; no trimming bishop could remove a Massachusetts Prince. In America, the preachers find an open field, if they find no favour; hence the quick and wide success which may greet a new and seductive doctrine like that of Spiritual wives. But this doctrine crossed the seas from Europe to America; and although it can hardly boast of such grand results in Germany and in England as it shows in both the religious circles and the rationalistic societies of the United States, yet some traces of its presence may be found in our day, in every country peopled by men of Teutonic race.

The doctrine of Natural Mates and Spiritual Love between the sexes is an old Gothic doctrine; one which published itself in the great Fraternity of the Free Spirit; which startled mankind in the conduct of John of Leyden; which appeared in the sermons and the practices of Ann Lee; which took