THE WOMEN
OF
MORMONISM;

OR

THE STORY OF POLYGAMY

As Told by the Victims Themselves.

EDITED BY

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WITH AN

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ILLUSTRATED.

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THE true secret of the anomalous condition of woman among the Mormons, is, that it has been Mormon policy to degrade her to the position she occupied among barbaric nations in the dark ages, before the light of civilization raised her to be what God intended at the creation,—man's equal, companion, and helpmate. If this doctrine of woman's inferiority had not been rigidly enforced, polygamy would never have gained its present strength, nor even have been established as an essential doctrine of the church. But in order to give the innovation a permanent place among the dogmas of the new religion, it was necessary to make woman believe that she was an inferior being, a lower creation than man, that her only chance of salvation, her only opportunity of entering the gates of Heaven, was as a satellite, to add glory to some male Saint. It was also taught, and is still, that a woman cannot be raised from the dead except through some man, and
in fact, the entire spirit of Mormon teachings so far as the relations of the sexes are concerned, is man's superiority to woman, mentally and morally, as well as physically.

We do not know how we can better describe the estimation in which woman is held among the Mormons, than by quoting from one of their prophets, the late Heber C. Kimball. His common expression for them was his cows; and when exhorting the brethren "to live their religion," as they sacrilegiously term going into polygamy, he would say, "I think no more of taking another wife than I do of buying a cow, and if you want to build up the kingdom you must take more wives."
The expression "build up the kingdom" has a dual meaning, one referring to the temporal welfare of the church, the other to personal celestial glory. The more wives and children a man has, the greater will be his glory in the celestial kingdom; and the larger his family, the greater power and strength he adds to the organization here. Hence, men are constantly being urged by the leaders "to build up the kingdom."

But to return to the early history of polygamy. Any unfortunate or rebellious star, who declined the honor of being one of these satellites, and attached to the illustrious train of one of Israel's chosen kings,—all good Mormons are going to be kings in the next world, and the Gentiles their subjects,—was destined to roam forever through realms of darkness, or as the prophet tersely and less poetically ex-
pressed it, "If the women would not submit to
polygamy, they should be eternally damned." These are Brigham Young's own words, often re-
peated in council and sometimes in the public Tabernacle. Old Mormons do not hesitate to say
that the word "damned" may be interpreted as a
synonym for murdered, and that the threat has fre-
quently been carried into execution. There are also
many instances on record where the destined victim
has anticipated her doom, and precipitated it by her
own hand, preferring death to shame and dishonor.
Verily it is not exaggeration to declare that the an-
nals of this horrible system can never be truly
transcribed until they are written in letters of blood.

During the first few years after the religion of
Joseph Smith had begun to spread and gain disciples,
theocracy was not so firmly established, neither was
there any difference manifest between men and
women. Both were earnest, sincere seekers for
truth; determined, if possible, to find in the new re-
ligion what they fancied was denied them in the
old. The principles taught, appeared to be pure and
good,—belief in the divinity of the Saviour, equality,
brotherly love, and other tenets of revealed religion.
One old Mormon said to the writer: "The Saints
were all they professed to be in early days. They
fed the hungry, clothed the poor, feared God, and
loved their neighbors as themselves. Of course,
they had the utmost confidence in and reverence for
their prophet, and like all innovators and impos-
tors, he labored to exert the greatest possible influ-
ence over his dupes. And never did impostor succeed better. Men who were intelligent and otherwise strong-minded became as submissive as children under his powerful hand.

People often say that they now look back with the utmost amazement to those days, and marvel at the strange magnetic influence which this illiterate, wicked man possessed over men and women of intelligence and education. That he was of loose and immoral character is conceded by his warmest friends, as well as his bitterest enemies. Even his successor, Brigham Young, said that Joseph was of mean birth, wild, intemperate, dishonest, and tricky; but for all that he was a prophet of the Lord. These inconsistencies may seem strange to outsiders, but they are understood by those who are acquainted with the inner workings of Mormonism. Brigham further said that these "trifling faults" were nothing against the religion which he had founded. The following are Brigham's exact words in this reference: "I care not if he (Joseph) gamble, lie, swear, run horses, and marry women every day; for I embrace no man in my faith."

But the followers of Joseph were not all so blinded by his influence, neither had they become so corrupt, nor so lost to all principles of truth and honor as to sanction his unblushing wickedness; so, in order to screen himself from the consequences of his iniquity, and at the same time retain his influence over his followers, he conceived the idea of obtaining the revelation on polygamy.
PUBLIC BUILDINGS IN SALT LAKE CITY.
Those who have studied closely the early history of Mormonism declare that polygamy was latent in it from its very conception, and that the practice and the revelation were no mere accidents or after-thoughts on the part of the natural-born libertine who propagated them. Stenhouse, in the "Rocky Mountain Saints," speaking of the early days of Mormonism, says, that "all through the history of the Church, during the lifetime of Joseph, may be noticed a disposition to free-loveism;" and Brigham Young is on record as having said that "the principle of celestial marriage was one of the first things the angel showed to Joseph,"—and this before Mormonism started.

It is not our purpose at present to discuss any of these theories, nor to enter into any particulars regarding its original conception. We will simply state what is an indisputable fact, that Joseph Smith, while in Nauvoo had entered into criminal relations with a number of his female disciples, and the scandal became so notorious as to threaten his influence and compromise him as a leader and teacher of religion, when he pretended to have had a revelation from Heaven commanding the Saints to adopt what is termed, "The order of celestial or plural wives." The wife of an apostle who lived in Nauvoo at that time, and who is still living in Salt Lake City, has repeatedly affirmed that she was aware that such a revelation was contemplated several weeks before the date on which Joseph avowed he had received it from Heaven. It is only simple
justice to those women whom Joseph deceived so shamefully, to state that he evidently taught the doctrine to them privately, telling them that it was a true principle, but the time had not yet arrived for its public announcement or practice. It is also only an act of simple justice to say that Emma Smith, Joseph's wife, never believed in the revelation, and her life was a constant martyrdom on account of her husband's "celestializing" propensities. Her sons are to-day the leaders of the "Reorganized Church of Latter Day Saints," or, as they are familiarly called, the "Josephites," a party who profess adherence to the original principles of Mormonism, as first taught by Joseph Smith, without the debasing doctrine of polygamy, which they condemn as severely as do the Gentiles.

Whatever the origin of the revelation, it is certain that it did not meet with a very enthusiastic reception at first, and by very many it was viewed with abhorrence: for there were men among them who dearly loved their wives, and who were jealous of the honor of their mothers and sisters. These men, notwithstanding their devotion to their leader and their religion, could not readily believe that Heaven could either command or sanction the practice of a system so dishonoring to the sex, and so contrary to every principle of morality and the usages of civilization. Some of the stronger minded, and of purer hearts, made a brave resistance, and a large number apostatized, and left the church forever. Before long, those who remained succumbed
to the authority of the church, and if they did not in reality believe in the revelation, they pretended to. And when once the downward path is entered upon, descent is easy.

Then it was that the crusade commenced against women. From the very first the majority of the women had considered the "revelation" in its true light—a cloak to cover immorality—and in many cases they were strongly supported by their husbands. But the authority of the church was so complete, and the influence of Joseph so great, that the infatuation soon became uncontrollable—a few fanatical women assumed to believe in the divinity of the revelation, and these being in high standing in the church, the rest were not long in perceiving that the struggle would be a terrible one, and almost sure to end in their defeat.

The maidens were as adverse to becoming plural wives, as were the first wives to have their rights invaded and their honors desecrated; but where flattery failed to cajole or threats to intimidate, special revelations were obtained to suit special cases. The history of Joseph Smith's revelations would prove interesting reading, and would make a volume of no mean dimensions, as he claimed to have received thirty-seven distinct communications from Heaven in the year 1831 alone. 'It was a great habit with him, after he had committed some particular breach of decorum, to obtain a revelation assuring him that "the Lord forgave his servant Joseph" his special sins.'
We are acquainted with the facts in one case, which was not a solitary one of its kind. A prominent apostle in Nauvoo, a bosom friend of the prophet and a strenuous supporter of the new doctrine, became infatuated with a young girl who had left her family in an Eastern State to become a Mormon. He was determined to have her for a plural wife, but she was as determined in her refusal. Wearying by his importunities, she told him one day, half in jest, that she would never marry him unless she was specially commanded to do so by Heaven. A few days afterward she was summoned to attend a private meeting of the prophet and several of the high priests, and was there informed that a special revelation had been sent from Heaven, ordering her to become the plural wife of the apostle. The poor girl was astonished enough, but still she had firm belief in the honesty of her religious teachers; and although she did it reluctantly, she married him, being afraid to disobey what she thought was a direct command from God. A friend questioned as to how the revelation came, and to whom it was given; but the girl acknowledged that she had such implicit faith in the church authorities, she would not have dared make those inquiries, even had they occurred to her mind.

This blind devotion and unquestioning faith has been the great means of giving the Mormon church its present strength and power. Years afterward, when this child—for she was but seventeen years of age when the event happened—
had outgrown her delusion, she said to her friend, “How could I have been so blind and foolish! how could I have let those wicked men dispose of me, body and soul, as if I had been a calf or a dog! Whenever I think of it, I hate and despise myself for my folly, for, in my case, folly was worse than crime.” This poor girl’s experience in polygamy was just what might have been expected, for she was soon discarded for another favorite, who did not need any special revelation in her case. It may be imagined what kind of a life she had, when she said these words in speaking of her husband: “The happiest day I spent for twenty years was the day I saw him laid in the grave.” Truly, this doctrine of polygamy is a damnable one for women!

During this crusade against woman, referred to above, nothing was left undone to compel them to accept the revelation on polygamy. Husbands were commanded to resort to all manner of severity if their wives would not consent to their taking more women, and those who objected to being taken were subjected to every conceivable persecution. Their reputations were blasted, and their souls threatens with eternal condemnation. If a woman declined to be divorced from her husband to become the concubine of the prophet, if he happened to fancy her, she was branded as an infamous character, and the Saints were warned not to associate with her thereafter. There are women living in Salt Lake City in this year of grace, 1882, who were secret plural wives to Joseph Smith or Brigham Young,
deceiving their own husbands, because they dared not brave the prophet's anger and its consequences. For then, as to-day, the Mormon weapon against its antagonists was _slander_. The man or woman who has the moral courage to apostatize, becomes a target for the vilest kind of abuse and falsehood. Of this more will be said hereafter.

And yet all this persecution was conducted in the most secret manner possible. In public, the Saints denied that they either advocated or practiced polygamy, though it was the one important and all-absorbing theme of their councils in private. Those who would not sanction or follow the revelation were denounced as traitors to their faith, whose portion should be the lake of fire and brimstone forever. One old lady who had passed through that terrible ordeal, said: "A person can scarcely form the slightest conception of what we suffered during that dreadful time; poverty, sickness, distress, or death would have been nothing compared to what we endured. Indeed, death would have been gladly welcomed by many of us; but, alas, we cried in vain; he would not come!

"Our husbands were enjoined to treat us with the utmost severity if we objected to their 'living their religion;' not alone to withdraw all marks of esteem and affection, but also to deprive us of the necessaries as well as the comforts and luxuries of life. 'Starve them and beat them, if necessary, to bring them to submission,' was the counsel; 'better crucify the body than let the soul go to perdition.'"
"If, by chance, the men were rebellious, they were dispatched on missions, and their wives commanded to receive the attentions of other men during their absence. I dare not repeat the counsel given on this point, it is so grossly indecent and immoral. If a wife fell a victim to the snare, and her husband found more children in his home when he returned than when he left, it was all 'religion.' If she remained true and loyal, her reputation was ruined among the Saints. And when the Mormons came to Utah, and were so completely isolated from the influences of the outside world, there was no help or redress for the women. Those of us who rebelled against the doctrine were treated without tenderness, or even respect. In fact, we were regarded as simply brood animals. Brigham Young frequently told the women that they must not expect their husbands to love them, it was enough honor to be allowed to bear children to a Saint. Then when that reign of terror known as the 'Reformation' was inaugurated, thousands were compelled to enter polygamy in order to save themselves from being 'blood-stoned.' Then a single woman could scarcely be found in the length and breadth of the Territory; and when the supply of marriageable girls had given out, others were recruited from the ranks of the children. It was a very common affair for a little girl of thirteen or fourteen years to be forced into polygamy with some wretch old enough to be her grandfather! After long years of such tyranny, and inhuman treatment, is it any wonder that our
women became reduced to the lowest depths of
degradation?"

'The same lady said upon another occasion: "Polyg-
amy is the direst curse with which a people or a
nation could be afflicted. I could tell you stories
even to fill volumes, of its vile workings, its
unholy influences, its horrible results. It completely
demoralizes good men, and makes bad men corrup-
tionantly worse. As for the women—well, God
help them! First wives it renders desperate, or else
heart-broken, mean-spirited creatures; and it almost
unsexes some of the other women, but not all of them,
for plural wives have their sorrows too. An elder
once said to me, 'Sister Sarah, you are a regular
Satan.' I had been giving my views in regard to
polygamy and polygamists. I answered him, 'There
are only two classes of Mormon women, devils and
fools.'

"Talk about the lost women of the outside
world! Are any of them so lost to all sense of shame
that they will parade themselves before the wife,
and rob her unblushingly not only of the affections
of her husband, but of every particle of his sub-
stance, even the bread out of her children's mouths?
They at least have shame enough to keep themselves
hidden from the women they may happen to wrong.
But I have known my husband's concubines to enter
my home, after I would not have them in the house
with me any longer, and deliberately take away the
food and clothing I had earned with my own hands,
and my husband stand by without a word of expos-
tulation or reproof. He was not in a position at that time to give them what they desired or needed, and he did not care if they robbed me of my last penny, even if my little children went hungry or naked in consequence. Yet before he became a polygamist he was as kind and tender a husband as ever lived."

But alas for the consistency of the Latter-day religion! A husband like this will often descant for hours upon the advantages of the "divine ordinance," especially for the benefit of distinguished strangers. There is one apostle in particular who is frequently chosen to fill this office, who, as the Mormons say, becomes completely lifted out of himself in expatiating upon the benefits of the divine order of marriage, and its ennobling influences upon the women. This holy apostle has never provided properly for any of his wives, two or three have left him, he has deserted as many more, one of whom died of sheer destitution under the most heart-rending circumstances; and yet he is perfectly fanatical on the subject of polygamy.

Is it any wonder that those who have suffered, or seen others suffer, from the horrors of this system, should wish it "blotted out so completely that even its foul memory should die?"
CHAPTER XIII.

An Annual Appeal.

Quotation from the Deseret News.—Joseph Smith's Widows.—Changed Views.—Smith's Denunciation of Polygamy.—Married or Single.—Controversy with God.—Polygamy Binding upon All or None.—No Plural Marriage.

The following was published in a little different form, but substantially the same, in the columns of the Anti-Polygamy Standard. It was addressed to those Mormon women, collectively, who are public advocates of the doctrine of polygamy, and whose teachings have been potent in influencing hundreds of women to sacrifice themselves upon this cruel altar. Of course, the appeal never elicited any reply or explanation. None could be truthfully given without convicting a number of these sisters of falsehood, as any unprejudiced reader can see for himself by comparing the historical facts quoted below from their own church records.

Writing to the Deseret News, the Mormon church organ, under date Oct. 17, 1879, Eliza R. Snow says:—

"It may be asked, Why defend plurality of wives, since the United States Government forbids (155)
its practice? The action of the executors of this Government can neither change nor annihilate a fundamental truth; and this action, in preventing the practice of plural marriage, shoulders a heavier responsibility than any nation has ever assumed, with one exception,—that of the ancient Jews. If the Government can afford it, we can. The controversy is with God, not us."

This was signed "Eliza R. Snow, a wife of Joseph Smith, the prophet."

On the occasion of a woman's meeting at the Theater in Salt Lake City in the fall of 1878, for the purpose of justifying the doctrine of plural marriage, and of protesting against the right of the United States Government to interfere with its practice, Mrs. Zina D. Jacobs, (generally known as Mrs. Zina Young,) proclaimed herself as one of the widows of the prophet Smith. At that same meeting, Miss Eliza R. Snow and Mrs. Phoebe Woodruff declared that they knew polygamy was a divine ordinance, and its practice a direct command from God. Miss Snow further said that she looked with sympathy and commiseration upon the misguided Gentile women who were opposing the sacred institution. "They are trying to measure arms with the Almighty," she exclaimed, "and they know not what they do. We believe in the principle of plural marriage as sacredly as we believe in any other institution which God has revealed."

We will not question the sincerity of these "priestesses of polygamy," but we would like to ask them
MORMON ASSEMBLY HALL, SALT LAKE CITY.

RESIDENCE OF THE LATE PRESIDENT BRIGHAM YOUNG.
AN EARNEST APPEAL

how they have happened to change their minds so completely; for in early days they assumed a very different attitude upon this question. Some of us, workers in the Anti-Polygamy cause, were good Mormons in the days before polygamy was a principle of the Latter-day faith. Some of us were in Nauvoo when Joseph Smith and John C. Bennett were deceiving any number of sisters, and when "spiritual wifery" was first concocted as a means of allaying the scandal which had grown to such alarming proportions, that there were threats from the most devout Mormons, of cleaning out the entire iniquitous nest. But worse than all, the scandal was not confined to Nauvoo, but had also gained credence in the outside world.

However, the prophet was a man of sagacity equal to the occasion, and he immediately came out in an article, which can be found in Vol. 3 of Times and Seasons, the Mormon church official organ, denouncing the "secret wife" system as the manufacture of John C. Bennett, who thus perpetrated a foul and infamous slander upon an innocent people.

Elder Hyrum Brown was excommunicated for preaching polygamy in Michigan, and certificates were published, numerously signed, setting forth that the Latter-day church and the people of Nauvoo know of no other system of marriage than that contained in the "Book of Doctrines and Covenants," which, of course, was monogamic.

And some of us remember the indignation manifested by these very sisters who are now so positive
of the divinity of polygamy, that such a "foul slander should have been perpetrated upon the innocent Mormons." Some of these sisters who now announce themselves as widows of the martyred prophet, then testified publicly that polygamy did not exist, as witness the following, which we copy from Times and Seasons of 1843:—

"We, the undersigned, members of the Ladies' Relief Society, and married females, do certify and declare that we know of no system of marriage being practiced in the church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, save the one contained in the 'Book of Doctrines and Covenants;' and we give this certificate to the public to show that J. C. Bennett's 'secret wife' system is a disclosure of his own make." This is signed by Eliza R. Snow, Phebe Woodruff, and fifteen others.

Both of these sisters now call themselves widows of Joseph Smith, who was killed in 1844, only one year subsequent to the time when they testified that the "secret wife" system was a disclosure of J. C. Bennett's own make. We should be gratified if they would explain these conflicting statements, and tell us why they then denied so solemnly the existence of what they now declare they know to be a divine institution, revealed by God. And furthermore, we should be glad if sister Eliza would tell us to whom she was married at the time of that denial, for she publicly avowed herself to be a "married female," and we knew her as Miss Eliza R. Snow, a single woman.
If she was married to Joseph Smith at that time, as a plural wife, then she signed her name to what she must have known was a falsehood; and if she was not married to the prophet, then she publicly acknowledges herself to be an impostor in now claiming to be his widow.

It is these glaring discrepancies that make us doubt their ability to lead the masses of the Mormon women, of whom they are the acknowledged head and teachers, in the paths of truth and virtue. It is these which make us think, even at the risk of being deemed uncharitable, that they are more culpable than "blind leaders of the blind."

But, in regard to the declaration of E. R. Snow that "the controversy is with God, not us," we would say—

Be that as it may, woe of the Anti-Polygamy cause, in behalf of ourselves, and in the interest of the innocent women,—yes, of all women, innocent or guilty,—and of the girls in this Territory, "with charity to all, and with malice toward none,"—we have a controversy with E. R. Snow, and Mrs. Jacobs, and Mrs. Woodruff, and with any other polygamous person who publicly proclaims adherence to and belief in polygamy. We desire to know fully and explicitly upon what such belief and adherence is based.

Come, and let us reason awhile together upon this all-important subject. If polygamy is good for you, why would it not be good for us? and if it is a blessing and benefit for one, it should be a benefit
must keep mistresses, and as they have always heard polygamy compared with the social evil, they soon learn to place the two systems on the same level. And as a consequence, girls who have seen the utter misery produced by the one system do not hesitate about embracing the other in preference. There is a certain noted woman in Salt Lake City, who declares that during her residence there, she has refused admission to hundreds of young Mormon girls who would lead voluntary lives of shame.

One of the reasons given by the apostles of polygamy for its acceptance is, that its practice will redeem the race from the many evils which are prevalent in modern society; that it respects the desires of every woman to be an honorable wife and mother, and leaves no unmarried element to go astray.

In a recent newspaper article, one of the Mormon leaders made the remarkable statement that the Mormons held chastity in man as a virtue that should be maintained as rigidly as in woman, and that it should be valued and cherished in both sexes as more precious than life itself. We repeat, a "remarkable statement," because none knew its falsity better than the man who made it; and it was made for the express purpose of deceiving those people who were inclined to favor legislation against Mormon polygamy. But let us see if the history of Mormonism will bear out any of these specious reasons given for the practice of the peculiar institution.

Stenhouse, who was a Mormon for twenty years
or more, and whose "Rocky Mountain Saints" is admitted by the most bigoted Mormons to be a true and impartial history of their sect, says, in speaking of the early days of Mormonism: "Even at this time a few of the new converts appear to have exhibited loose notions of morality. Of these, some charged with being adulterers and adulteresses were stated to have been turned away, and others were warned to beware and repent speedily."

He further says: "All through the history of the church, during the lifetime of Joseph Smith, may be noticed a disposition to free-loveism." These statements are very mild compared with those of other authors, but we do not think they prove very conclusively that this virtue was rigidly observed in the early days of the church.

To show that the morals of the Saints had not improved very radically in the days of the prophet Brigham, we will quote again from Stenhouse, in regard to the famous (or infamous) "Reformation" in Utah. It is recorded that "on one occasion, a public meeting was called at the Social Hall, which was very largely attended by the priesthood or male members only. Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, and others, addressed the elders. Brigham, in his speech, requested all present who had been unfaithful to their marriage vows to stand up. To the surprise of some, and the chagrin of the presidency, more than three-fourths stood on their feet. It is related that Brigham was as much appalled at this sight as was Macbeth when he beheld the woods of