Exposé of Polygamy

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Published by Utah State University Press

DeSimone, Linda and Fanny Stenhouse.  
Exposé of Polygamy: A Lady's Life Among the Mormons.  
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WHAT I KNOW ABOUT POLYGAMY.

CHAPTER I.

Early Life and Experience of the Authoress.

I was once a Mormon woman, and for over twenty years I have lived among Mormons. Their faith was once mine as truly as any words can express; their thoughts were the same as mine; their hopes were my hopes; their religious opinions were in sympathy with my own. But that was in the time past. It seems long past, and yet it was, as I may say, only a little while ago—a few months, which I might almost count upon my fingers. Yet now all this is changed, and I have learned to see matters in another light.

When I first listened to the preaching of the Mormon elders, I endeavoured to judge impartially of their doctrines. I thought then that they were right. To me, at the time, they were right. But other views, which I now believe to be purer, better, and more truthful, have dawned upon my soul, and I can, I think, fairly say that I am a free woman—free from the bondage of superstition; and as I write this, I feel the pleasure of the captive who shakes himself free from his chains.

It has been suggested to me that I should, from my own personal experience, write the story of a Mormon woman living in the midst of Mormonism. I shall endeavour, in the following pages, to do so impartially and truthfully. But I wish to tell my story as simply as I can. Others, who are but partially informed, may write critically of what they have seen or heard; but I shall give a record of what I myself have known and felt.

Whatever opinion the reader may form of my life, past or present, is to me of little moment, and to him it can not be of much consequence. Personally, I have no claims to the attention and consideration of the world, nor do I desire that it should be otherwise. But as no woman's experience in Utah, who has been associated with Mormonism and seen its polygamic life, could be very different from my own, the facts set forth in this little work will enable the reader to comprehend the operation of the order of “celestial marriage.”

To answer the inquiry, how any woman can submit to the practice of polygamy, I must of necessity give a brief history of my early life. From what I shall there state, the reader will see how I was led on, little by little,
from total ignorance of that doctrine, to a firm faith that it was a revelation from God, necessary to salvation.

However strange what I relate may appear to those who are unacquainted with life in Utah, my story is but a shadow of the truth, although my experience was, probably, the same as that of nine tenths of the Mormon women.

My first recollections of life were in St. Helier’s, Jersey, one of the islands in the English Channel, where I was born. Through the preferences of my parents, my religious education and associations were with the Baptist denomination, my own disposition and feelings making this connection very agreeable, as I had, probably, for a girl of my age, a more than ordinary interest in religious observances.

When fifteen years of age, I went to Brittany, in France, and entered into a Roman Catholic school as a teacher of English. While there, I had, of course, to conform to the rules of the school, and attend church with the pupils at all times when required to do so. Much as I respected the people with whom I was associated, for their kindness, I could not conscientiously join with them in their devotions. I always took my Bible with me, and read it during the service; and frequently in my loneliness and anxiety for some living religious truth, I would say, “Oh! if there were only a prophet ministering now on earth, that I might go to him and ask, ‘What shall I do to be saved?’ and thus receive an answer which would satisfy the craving of my soul.”

I remained in France six years, and then I obtained two months’ vacation, for the purpose of visiting my parents, who had now removed from the island of Jersey to Southampton, (England.)