Exposé of Polygamy
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CHAPTER IV.


After about a year’s absence, Mr. S. returned to England, and we were invited to attend a conference of the Saints, which was to be held in London, in June, 1851. During this conference, the “Apostle” Snow expressed his great indignation at the manner in which I had been neglected, and said that I should no longer remain in connection with the Southampton Conference. It was decided that my husband should go on a mission to Switzerland; that I should go with him, and that we should begin our missionary labours in Geneva. One great incentive to this resolution was, that I could speak the French language fluently. It was, therefore, thought that I should be of great service in assisting Mr. S. with his work. I was ready to do any thing that might be required of me, if only I could be with him.

Mr. S. had once more silenced my fears about Polygamy, and I was again happy.

We started on our journey—Mr. S., myself, and our dear little Clara, who was then only six months old. How much I loved that little child, no tongue can tell! Had she not been my sole companion through so many weary days and nights of sorrow?

On our arrival at Geneva, we commenced our missionary labours immediately; but we made very little progress, as Mr. S. was not much acquainted with the French language, and the Genevese do not readily receive strangers. We had but a small sum of money left when we reached our destination, and we economized as much as we possibly could, hoping to make what we had last until some one should join the church, who might be able to assist the mission. We had full faith and confidence that the Lord would raise up friends to aid us in the work. But time rolled on, and we had laboured faithfully for several months with apparently little success.

My whole soul was in my mission, and I was resolved to fulfil it, as far as human power, aided by the grace of God, could do so. I sought every
opportunity of introducing among the ladies the Mormon faith; and I
tried in every way to live in such a manner as to be an example to those
who might be converted and join the church, or who might be inclined
to do so. We kept “The Word of Wisdom”* strictly, and never took tea,
coffee, wine, or warm drinks of any kind for years.

Mr. S. studied early and late to acquire a knowledge of the French lan-
guage, hoping soon to be able to make some impression upon the people.

One day he received a letter from an “infidel,” who lived in a neigh-
bouiring canton, asking him to come and see him, in order that they
might talk over Mormonism, for he had heard of us and our doctrine. We
were very much pleased at this invitation, for it seemed now that the Lord
was about to do something. Mr. S. accordingly went to see this man. He
stayed with him several days, convinced him of the truth of the new faith,
and, finally, baptized him. He then returned home.

Our money was now nearly gone, and I was very weak from lack
of proper nourishment, and dispirited by continual anxiety. I caught a
severe cold, and was confined to my bed for a time. My courage at last
entirely failed me. Weak and sick as I was, not a soul came to my room. In
fact, who should come? I had no friend there. The very knowledge that we
had come to set forth a strange and unpopular religion, made every one
avoid me.

My husband was sad and very anxious. Nor need this excite won-
der when it is considered that there was nothing to make life pleasant to
either of us, except the thought that we were both the servants of God,
and had dedicated our lives to His service.

About a month after the return of Mr. S. from the house of the gen-
tleman whom he had baptized, we received a letter from him. As it was
opened, a piece of gold fell on the table. It afterward appeared that this
new convert, although he “suspected it might be useful,” did not like to
offer money to Mr. S. But when he had gone, he determined to send a
trifle, saying, at the same time, that “the labourer is worthy of his hire.”
Never was a Scripture phrase more truthful and welcome in its applica-
tion. We were very grateful indeed for this timely help, small as it was, for
it seemed to us like a recognition of our work. How great are trifles to the
hopeful mind!

There were dark clouds on every side, and in moments of despon-
dency we almost feared that they would never clear away. Yet in all this
trouble, our faith remained unshaken; and even in the darkest hour of
trial, we felt happy in the belief in the divinity of Mormonism.

With all our faith, one question was, perforce, ever uppermost in
our minds, how to obtain the necessary means of subsistence? This was an
unanswerable difficulty. With the very greatest economy, the time came

* A “Revelation” of Joseph Smith, which all good Mormons observed.
at last when our money was all gone. We had not a coin, or any representa tive of money, and we had no reason to hope for any. We were in a strange country, among strangers, and in the depth of winter, without fire and without food. What was to be done? In the anguish of my soul, I exclaimed, with bitter tears, “Look down, O God! in Thy mercy, upon my innocent little one, who is now suffering from cold and hunger, while we, her parents, are devoting our lives, our all, to Thy service.”

In this trying hour we were speechless. We both felt our helplessness, but neither dared to speak to the other about that which weighed so heavily upon our hearts. It was only our belief in the divinity of our mission that sustained us. Incredible as it may appear, for nearly one week all that we had to exist upon was about a pint of corn flour or maize, and that was principally reserved for our child.

Up to this time, but two persons had joined the church in Geneva. They were poor men, and their wives were very much opposed to the step which they had taken in embracing Mormonism, and thus there was very little to expect from them. We were living in a furnished room, and my little daughter was a great favourite with the family in whose house we were. I was not sorry for this; for in the time of our greatest distress, I used often quietly to open my door at their meal times, and the child would make her way to the dining-room, and get something to eat. Humiliating as this was to me, I felt satisfied for a while, at least, that she was not suffering from hunger as much as we ourselves were.

At the end of that week, when it seemed that we could not exist another day without some nourishment, Mr. S. went to the house of one of the newly converted brethren, whom I have mentioned, with the intention of telling him of our peculiarly distressing circumstances; but when he arrived there, he really had not courage to do so, and he returned again without saying any thing of the matter. My heart sank within me, for I entered into his thoughts, although he did not speak. My little one was then reposing in my arms. She had cried herself to sleep, hungry and cold.

I could not say any thing to my husband when he came home; for I felt instinctively that he had been unsuccessful, and I was almost choking with emotion, which I attempted to suppress. As we sat there silently in the twilight, neither of us venturing to speak to the other, I mentally prayed to the Lord, (if it was His will,) that rather than see my darling wake up again to hunger and suffering, she might quietly sleep her sweet young life away. As I now write, the recollection of that time comes back so vividly that my eyes fill with tears.

While sitting in this fearful gloom, which afterward seemed to me the most solemn hour of my life, I heard a step in the hall, and something whispered to me, “Help is coming.” A moment after, the brother whom Mr. Stenhouse had called upon entered the room with some
provisions, and he slipped a five-franc piece into my hand. Mr. S. had said nothing to him; but after he had left the house, this brother said that from my husband's manner, he felt convinced that we were suffering, as he knew that as missionaries we had no means of subsistence, and that according to the usual custom among the Mormons, we had to preach "without purse or scrip."

The assistance thus received was a relief from present want, but the future seemed like a dark cloud to hang over my path. I was now in worse circumstances than I had been at the birth of my first child; for I was among strangers, and had absolutely nothing but what the few brethren were kind enough to bring to us from time to time.

I again found, as I had previously experienced at many other periods of my life, the truth of the old verse:

"Behind a frowning providence,
God hides a smiling face."

The "smiling face" this time took once more the form of the "Apostle" Snow. Oh! how glad I was to see him. He had, as I have related, brought me joy and gladness once before when I was in great trouble, and I almost looked upon him as my good genius. After all, I was not so very much mistaken; for he gave me a little money to provide for our present necessities, and told Mr. Stenhouse that after a while he should return to England, and raise whatever funds might be needful to enable us to carry out our mission; for he plainly saw that, however enduring faith might be, no one could live without money. In fact, the American elders, as I afterward discovered, did not themselves try, under similar circumstances, to work unaided, although they had no objection to the British elders doing so.

After the birth of my second child,3 we went to Lausanne, Canton de Vaud; for Mr. Stenhouse thought it would be better for me to remain there during his absence in England, as he had, in addition to this "infidel," whom he had baptized, made the acquaintance of a very good man of very excellent family. In this gentleman's house I engaged apartments, expecting to pay for them, but he never permitted me to do so; and from that day, I never suffered in Switzerland from want of the necessaries of life.

I lived very quietly and comfortably for three months, during the absence of Mr. S. in England. I had not much, it is true; but then a very little sufficed for my wants. I had that, and I was satisfied and happy; for this Mr. B. and his family were very kind indeed to me, and even now, as I review the past, I can say, with all truthfulness, that from the commencement of my missionary life—now over twenty years ago—till I left Mormonism, that brief period in Switzerland was the only happy time I ever knew.4