Exposé of Polygamy
DeSimone, Linda, Stenhouse, Fanny

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CHAPTER X.


The practice of Polygamy in some instances results in alliances which among all civilized peoples would be considered equally unnatural, immoral, and opposed to the dictates of religion.

It is quite a common thing in Utah for a man to marry two, and even three sisters. I was very well acquainted with one man who married his half-sister; and I know of several who have married mother and daughter. I know also another man who married a widow with several children; and when one of the girls had grown into her teens, he insisted on marrying her, having first by some means won her affections. The lady, however, was, I am pleased to say, very much opposed to this marriage, and finally gave up her husband entirely to her daughter; but to this very day this daughter bears children to her stepfather, living in the same house with her mother! These things are so revolting to me that I have scarcely patience to write about them.

I will, however, mention another instance which is nearly as bad. A rather prominent man in Salt Lake City, who has several wives and married daughters, only a few weeks ago married a young girl about fifteen years of age—a child that his first wife had adopted and brought up as her own. It is said to be a source of great sorrow to his first wife. Such men deserve punishment; for there is no shadow of religious obligation in the transaction. I know that he has next to no faith in Brigham Young.

But there is a pleasing change noticeable in the plural marriages in Salt Lake. There are not nearly so many marriages of this kind among the actual citizens of Salt Lake City as there were three or four years ago. The girls, although they will tell you that they believe it is right, will also say that they would rather do with “a little less glory” hereafter and take a little more comfort here. Many at the same time do not hesitate to say that they are altogether doubtful about the propriety of such marriages,
for the doctrine and practice of Polygamy have made such bad men of their fathers and such victims of their mothers.

It is not our city girls who maintain so much the plural marriages; but it is chiefly the newly arrived English and country girls who supply the Patriarchs.

The American Elders have derived a rich harvest from Britain for many years past. Soon after the introduction of Polygamy, an elder was seldom known to return from his mission to England without arranging there for one, sometimes two, and I have known as many as three girls—and these own sisters also—brought out at one time and all married by the same man. I personally know several men who have done so, but, on account of their families, I do not wish to mention their names.

The elders are not permitted to marry these extra wives while engaged on their missions in foreign countries, but are counselled to wait till they return “home.” Some of these weak brothers, however, have not been able to wait for the ceremonies of the “Endowment House.” It is but just to add that they do marry them when they get to “Zion.”

Some elders have bound the foreign girls by solemn vows or covenants to become their wives when they get to Utah, and the poor girls, believing that these men, because they were missionaries, were justified in all they did, have many times, to their great injury, kept those “covenants” and married them. One young lady, on her arrival in Salt Lake City, came to my house to live, and after she had been with me about a week, I observed that a married man came very frequently to see her. As I took a great interest in her, I questioned her, and advised her not to enter rashly into any marriage. She was a very handsome and a good girl, and she assented to the propriety of what I said. But the visitor still continued to come, and I observed that the girl became very much depressed and unhappy, and I frequently found her in tears. I then determined to inquire into the matter, for I had heard so much of the elders binding women by these covenants; and I found that in this case the man had persecuted her with his attentions and protestations of undying love, and his power to “exalt” her in the kingdom of God, until he had exacted from her a promise to become his wife. Not contented with her simple promise, for he knew that she did not really love him, he framed an oath and made her repeat it after him. She would not tell me the nature of the oath, for she said it was too dreadful to repeat. She said that since she had taken this vow she had become perfectly wretched, and could not tell what to do.

I advised her to go to President Young about it; for I knew that he had publicly told the Elders that they were not to make these covenants, and I thought that he was too honourable a man to see a helpless girl imposed upon. She did not like to go and see him, and said that she was
ashamed of having made such a covenant; “besides,” she added, “no mat-
ner what the President might say, I know that the Lord would curse me
if I were to break that covenant.” As she did not lodge at my house, I
could not keep her out of this man’s company as much as I wished; and
he, knowing that delays are dangerous, lost no time in accomplishing his
wishes. She had no relations, and was therefore entirely in his power.

One Friday evening I asked Mr. Stenhouse to invite her to accom-
pany us to a ball, and she gladly accepted, as she had refused to go
with her tormenter, and she hoped that it would offend him. Next day
she did not make her appearance as usual, and I became alarmed, for
Saturday is the day on which they marry at the “Endowment House.” I
sent to her friend’s house where she slept, and they replied that she had
gone to be married.

In the afternoon she came to me looking the picture of wretch-
edness, and said, “Mrs. Stenhouse, last night at the ball, that man ——
brought President —— to me and told him that I had promised to
marry him, and now would not do so. President —— said, ‘If you have
promised, keep your covenant.’ I have fulfilled my covenant, but I have
wrecked my happiness, for I cannot bear the man I have married. I have
told him so,” she continued, “but he does not care about it.” I even then
begged of her to let me see President Young, and consult with him, that
if possible something might be done to assist her out of her trouble. But
she would not let me do so; and it was evident that the man had acquired
such a terrifying influence over her that she really believed she would
be lost for ever if she did not literally fulfil the covenant which she had
made. This was one case that came particularly under my notice. But
I have frequently heard of such follies and dastardly impositions upon
young and inexperienced girls.1

Another young lady, a very near and dear friend, was crossing the
plains to Utah, when she met with one of the elders, who had been on a
mission and was returning. They became quite intimate, as people did at
that time when taking so long a journey together; and he proposed mar-
rriage to her. At the same time he used all his eloquence to show her how
much better it would be to marry a man who held such a high position in
the church as he held. He managed to convince her, and then persuaded
her to enter into a covenant with him by which she would be bound to
marry him.

Upon their arrival in Utah, he took her straight to his home, fear-
ing, I suppose, that some one else might get her; for at that time young
girls did not long remain single, and she was a very fine-looking girl and
very clever with her needle. She would, therefore, have made a desirable
addition to any man’s family; but when she saw the home he took her to,
she was horrified, and made up her mind to escape. But he had got her
there, and as she knew no one in the country, she felt that there was no possibility of escape.

When I arrived in Salt Lake City, I made enquiry about all this, as I had a right to, and found that he had actually frightened her into marrying him by making her believe that the curse of heaven would rest upon her if she were to break that covenant; and she passed a most wretched life, raising a family in abject poverty.

I would not have my readers think that I wish to say unkind things of the men of Utah, for I do not feel unkindly towards them. I once felt as if I perfectly hated the whole of the male sex, so great was my indignation. But now it is different; for I am a free woman, and therefore happy. How delightful is the sense of liberty! Oh! that all the women of Utah could feel as I do this day. My object is not to decry or speak evil of individuals. I simply want to show what men will do when under the influence of superstition, and how it will destroy the finest feelings of their natures.

People upon whom I could rely have told me of men who have unexpectedly married other wives and brought them home before their first wives knew anything about it; and this, simply because they had not courage to introduce the subject, and thought, as they say, that it would be best to “take a deep plunge and struggle out.” Who can conceive the feelings of a wife who has been thus treated; and what does a man know of woman’s nature, who can dare to treat her so; thinking and saying that “bye-and-bye she will be all right, and will get over it!”

Men of Utah! don’t you believe it! Women never do get over such treatment. They may appear calm; they may appear to forget; but all the while the remembrance of their wrongs is rankling in their hearts against you, and is never, never forgotten. The more devotedly a woman loves her husband, the more keenly she feels any thing that is calculated to destroy her confidence in the man she has looked upon as superior to all others, and when once that confidence is destroyed, how is it to be renewed?

O men of Utah! if you only knew the secret heart-aches of those you have vowed to love and protect, (and I believe that many of you would guard and protect them from sorrow, if you could,) sift this matter, and know for yourselves how more than foolish it is for you to cast away the true and undivided love of one devoted heart. Pay no attention to your wives when they tell you that they are happy, that they are satisfied. They may tell you this when their very hearts are breaking, simply because they wish to please their husbands, and, above all, to do the will of God. If you had the least discernment, you would discover by the changed manner, the almost cold indifference of the loved ones, who once were gushing with affection, whose winning and endearing ways captivated your hearts, that something must be wrong. I can never believe that the great God created our natures, such as they are, and then gave us laws that would outrage them.
I know that the Mormons would answer—“But you must bring your natures into subjection to the laws of God.” I know that no human being ever tried harder than I did to bring my own nature into subjection to this so-called “law of God;” but the more I saw of it, the more I loathed it, until I became perfectly disgusted and humiliated at being obliged to live in accordance with it.
“Are these all you have got?”